Appendix U

Social

MARINUS LINK

Marinus Link

Victorian Social Impact Assessment

May 2024

MARINUS LINK

Social Impact Assessment

Report reference number: 754-MELEN215878ML

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Restriction on Disclosure and Use of Data

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) proposes to construct and operate a second electricity interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria to export renewable energy. The main components of the project are a converter station at Heybridge Tasmania, a subsea cable under Bass Strait that leads to a fibre optic terminal station at Waratah Bay in Victoria that continues underground to a converter station located at either Driffield or Hazelwood in the Latrobe Valley. A transition station may also be required at Waratah Bay if there is a different supplier for the land and subsea cables.

This report presents the social impact assessment (SIA) of the Victorian terrestrial and marine components of the MLPL project. The social impacts of the proposed MLPL project are considered for the populations that live in the local study area (defined by 18 ABS state suburbs) and the regional study area (South Gippsland and Latrobe City local government areas).

Impact assessment methodology

A significance assessment approach was undertaken to assess the level of impacts to a social value, determined by the sensitivity of the value itself and the magnitude of the change it experiences.

Sensitivity is determined by assessing uniqueness or rarity, importance, resilience to change and replacement potential. Key sources for determining the sensitivity impacts include community consultation feedback and the social baseline outcomes.

Whilst magnitude is determined based on the criteria of severity, affected population and duration. Technical studies, community consultation, and the social baseline outcomes are key sources for determining magnitude ratings.

Social baseline

A social baseline was established for the local and regional study areas using data from the ABS 2021 census, government reports and academic publications. More than 145 stakeholders were invited to provide feedback during the SIA process, including local government, First Peoples, service providers, community groups and landholders. Data from the SIA consultation and ongoing project engagement informed the identification of the social impacts of the project and associated management measures to mitigate the identified impacts and a range of initiatives to enhance the range of benefits from the project.

The social baseline data highlighted the following:

- The median household income in the regional study area is 28% lower than in the state.
- Unemployment in the Latrobe Valley has been higher than in the state for the past 10 years.
- High proportions of unemployed First Peoples within the regional study area by comparison to non-Indigenous persons.
- Housing availability is constrained, with most areas in the regional study area experiencing below 2.0% rental vacancy rates.
- At the time of the 2021 census, private dwellings in the coastal towns of Waratah Bay and Sandy Point were 20% occupied (i.e. 80% were not occupied).
- Employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing was 15% of the South Gippsland workforce and 2.8% of Latrobe City LGA workforce. Health care and social assistance employed the greatest share of the workforce for the regional and local study area.

- Despite the high levels of employment in health care and social assistance, the regional population have access to a lower number of medical practitioners, psychologists, and dental practitioners per 100,000 population than the state of Victoria.

Social values

The key social values that resulted in a moderate or high negative and positive (residual) social impact identified in the impact assessment were:

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
Community identity **Describes how a community defines itself in terms of civic participation, resilience, feelings of trust and safety and sense of belonging and place**	First Peoples' Values, cultural diversity and heritage	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's establishment may result in losing Aboriginal cultural heritage values, both on land and oceanside.
	Amenity and landscape	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** Amenity impacts from construction activities, such as noise, dust and visual impacts may impact the community's strong values linked to character and amenity.
	Land use and natural resources	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's construction activities may result in temporary changes to the amenity and character that reduce the use of the beaches, state forests and nature reserves used by the community and are highly valued.
	Ecology	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's construction could impact on fauna and flora through injury or fatality through vehicle strikes, disturbance of habitat through vegetation clearing and fire risk.
	Community safety	Very sensitive	No expected project impacts. However, this social value should be considered when the workforce housing strategy is developed.
Economy and livelihood **Describes how people make a living and the economic structure of the affected community.**	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	**Potential positive impact:** The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce from within the local and regional study area, which aligns with the values of the community in expanding local employment opportunities and industries.
			Potential negative impact: The project's construction may increase the demand for construction workers and attract employees away from local businesses. This may reduce the availability of these workers for other industries and result in increased lead times for other types of construction and a shortage of workers for local businesses
			Potential positive impact: The project's operation is expected to support the employment of three direct employees within the local and regional study areas.
			Potential positive impact: The project may contribute to a diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities and skills training opportunities for residents across a range of skill levels. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food services.

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
			Potential positive impact: The project's construction will support local businesses by purchasing goods and services required to support the project's development.
	Industry and business	Very sensitive	**Potential positive impact:** A majority of the project's non-resident workforce would will utilise short-term accommodation providers in the regional study area.
			Potential negative impact: Tourism accommodation to be constrained due to the construction workforce using short-term accommodation providers. This may result in lower tourists visiting the region impacting on revenue for regional tourism operators and local businesses such as retail and food services
			Potential negative impact: Disruption to commercial fishing and shipping operations during construction of the subsea cable in Bass Strait.
			Potential negative impact: Disruption to agricultural activities, including restricted access to onsite infrastructure that will reduce the farm productivity and necessitate the redesign of the farm layout, including water-related infrastructure, fencing, internal access routes and the use of built structures.
			Potential negative impact: Reduced productivity yields of the agricultural and forestry enterprises from damage caused by construction and operational activities.
			Potential negative impact: Reduced economic and environmental viability of agricultural and forestry enterprises from damage caused to soil and water quality caused by incursions from project operation and maintenance activities.
			Potential positive impact: The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project. Marinus Link, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.
			Potential positive impact: The project may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples businesses to provide services that support activities and workforces on the ground as the project progresses.
	Housing affordability and availability	Very Sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's workforce may contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, disproportionately affecting very low and low-income households.
Infrastructure and services **Describes the infrastructure and services that meet the**	Health and wellbeing	Sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's construction workforce may increase demand for emergency service providers, compromising service provision to the existing local and regional community.
	Connectivity	Sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The performance of the road network in the project area during construction creates delays for existing

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
needs and priorities of the affected community, including municipal and social infrastructure and associated services.			road users, reducing the efficiency of the rural road network for rural road users in the local study.
	Safety and capacity	Sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project. **Potential negative impact:** Reduced road safety, including the road safety of vulnerable road users, including children and school buses.
People's productive capacities **Describes the skills, knowledge, and experience that are vital to survival and participation in society and its economy.**	Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** The project's planning and construction will require an investment of time by landholders and may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration.
	Health – physical and mental	Very sensitive	**Potential negative impact:** Concern about the project's potential impacts (e.g., EMF) may result in stress, anxiety and frustration for surrounding residents and communities.
			Potential positive impact: The project may add to the health and wellbeing of residents in the study area through investments in community infrastructure, the potential for downward pressure to be placed on the market regarding energy prices, as well as greater telecommunication security through expansion of the supply-side infrastructure.
			Potential positive impact: Employment opportunities for females, youth, First Peoples and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce are available. Consultation identified opportunities for youth, First Peoples and socially vulnerable people to gain new skills

Impact assessment pre-mitigation

The impact assessment, before mitigation and enhancement measures, identified:

- Seven negative impacts of major significance, with five during construction and two in the operational phase.
- Three positive impacts of high significance and 12 negative impacts of high significance, with 10 of these negative impacts during construction, one in both construction and operations and one impact in operation phase only.
- Twelve impacts of moderate significance, of which four are positive.
- Five impacts of low significance, of which four are positive impacts.

Environmental Performance Requirements (EPRs)

To mitigate potentially negative impacts and to maximise potential positive impacts, a range of mitigation measures have been identified and detailed as EPRs. A significance assessment has been undertaken to consider the social value and the magnitude of potential impacts.

A key EPR is the development of a social impact management plan (SIMP) (EPR S01), an overarching plan to monitor and manage social impacts. The SIMP will be developed before construction, in consultation with agencies, stakeholders and the affected community to be specific to locations along the alignment. The SIMP will draw on the supporting engagement, management and action plans that detail specific mitigation

measures and management strategies; these include the workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02) and the community and stakeholder engagement management plan (EPR S03).

Residual impacts

Following the implementation of recommended EPRs, the residual impacts were determined. The results of the residual impact assessment showed there were no major impacts. Five ratings remained high after mitigation, with one potential negative impact reduced from major through implementing mitigation measures. Of the high impacts, four of the ratings were positive impacts.

In addition, there were 19 moderate residual impacts (5 positives) and 14 low residual impacts (2 positives).

Below is a summary of the high residual impacts.

Potential impact	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Residual impact assessment	
	Sensitivity	Magnitude	Significance	Magnitude	Significance
Positive: The majority of the project's non-resident workforce will utilise short-term accommodation providers in the regional study area increasing revenue for local providers.	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	Unchanged	High
Positive: The project's construction will support local businesses through the goods and services required to support the project's development.	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	Moderate	High
Positive: The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	Unchanged	High
Negative: The project's workforce may contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, disproportionally affecting very low- and low-income households.	Very sensitive	Minor	Major	Moderate	High
Positive: The project may add to the health and wellbeing of residents in the study area through investments in community infrastructure, the potential for downward pressure to be placed on the market regarding energy prices, as well as greater telecommunication security through expansion of the supply-side infrastructure.	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	Unchanged	High

Cumulative impacts

Four projects were considered for the cumulative assessment. The approach to cumulative impact assessment is an adaptive environmental management approach, adopting ongoing proactive use of management plans involving monitoring, evaluation, and mitigation.

The ratings for cumulative impacts are:

Major

- **Potential negative impact:** The cumulative impact of the project workforce will contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, affecting very low and low-income households disproportionally.

Moderate

- **Potential negative impact:** The demand and competition for skilled labour resources may impact industries requiring similar skill sets.
- **Potential negative impact:** The cumulative impact of the project workforce will contribute to the demand for health and emergency service providers, which may compromise the service provided to the existing regional population.

Low

- **Potential positive impact**: Employment pathways for First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction and operations workforce are available.

Conclusion

The SIA findings highlight the project's positive and negative social impacts. The project presents opportunities for employment in the study area, with the opportunity to train and employ First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce. It may also generate positive economic contributions for short-term accommodation and local businesses.

However, the project raises concerns regarding construction impacts on amenity, impacts directly on landowners and agricultural businesses, displacement or loss of cultural heritage, ecology impacts and housing and workforce availability. Consideration also needs to be given to road infrastructure and haulage routes in the study area and the capacity of local healthcare services.

The recommendations in this SIA emphasise the need for proactive measures to mitigate adverse impacts and enhance positive outcomes. Considering the social impacts identified, it is important to prioritise integrating these findings into the project decision-making processes, ensuring social wellbeing for all stakeholders involved.

Additionally, strategies for ongoing community, workforce and accommodation strategy, industry participation plan and community benefits sharing scheme will help ensure stakeholders are central to the process and assist with the equitable distribution of project benefits and mitigate potential impacts.

MLPL will also develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples that commits to an ongoing relationship and partnership for the development and delivery of the project.

Furthermore, ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management outlined in the social impact management plan are essential to address emerging social challenges, foster continuous improvement, and maximise positive social impacts.

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
ABARES	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AEMO	Australian Energy Market Operator
AOD	Area of Disturbance
CEMP	Construction environmental management plan
CFA	Country Fire Authority
DEECA	Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victoria)
EES	Environment Effects Statement
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EMF	Electromagnetic fields
EPBC Act	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth)
FRV	Fire Rescue Victoria
GW	Giga Watts
GSRT	Great Southern Rail Trail
ha	hectare
HDD	Horizontal directional drilling
HVAC	High voltage alternating current
HVDC	High voltage direct current
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IPA	Immediate Protection Area
ISP	Integrated System Plan
km	kilometre
kV	Kilovolt
LGA	Local government area
m	metre
MLPL	Marinus Link Pty Ltd
MW	Megawatt
NEM	National Electricity Market
PHN	Primary Health Network
REZ	Renewable Energy Zone
SA2	Statistical Area Level 2
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SIA	Social impact assessment
SIMP	Social impact management plan
SSC	State suburb code
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The proposed Marinus Link (the project) comprises a high voltage direct current (HVDC) electricity interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria, to allow for the continued trading and distribution of electricity within the National Electricity Market (NEM).

The project was referred to the Australian Minister for the Environment on 5 October 2021. On 4 November 2021, a delegate of the Minister for the Environment determined that the proposed action is a controlled action as it has the potential to have a significant impact on the environment and requires assessment and approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act) before it can proceed. The delegate determined that the appropriate level of assessment under the EPBC Act is an environmental impact statement (EIS).

On 12 December 2021, the former Victorian Minister for Planning under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (Vic) (EE Act) determined that the project requires an environment effects statement (EES) under the EE Act, to describe the project's effects on the environment to inform statutory decision-making.

In July 2022, a delegate of the Director of the Environment Protection Authority Tasmania determined that the project be subject to environmental impact assessment by the Board of the Environment Protection Authority (the Board) under the *Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994* (Tas) (EMPCA).

As the project is proposed to be located within three jurisdictions, the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Tasmanian Environment Protection Authority (Tasmanian EPA) and Australian Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water (DCCEEW) have agreed to coordinate the administration and documentation of the three assessment processes. One EIS/EES is being prepared to address the requirements of DTP and DCCEEW. Two EISs are being prepared to address the Tasmanian EPA requirements for the Heybridge converter station and shore crossing.

This report has been prepared by Tetra Tech Coffey Pty Ltd (Tetra Tech Coffey) for the Victorian jurisdiction as part of the EIS/EES being prepared for the project.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report has been prepared as part of the EIS/EES for the project and addresses the assessment guidelines relevant to the Victorian and marine components of the project, outlined in Section 2. A separate technical report has been prepared for the Tasmanian component of the project. The SIA considers potential impacts and benefits to people's community identity; economy and livelihoods; infrastructure and services; and people's productive capacity. For the purposes of this assessment, 'people' refers to individuals, households, groups, communities or organisations.

This report aims to assess the potential social impacts and benefits of constructing and operating the project. The report:

- describes the existing social baseline conditions of potentially affected communities and groups in the project study area;
- uses an integrated approach to assess potential social impacts and benefits of constructing and operating the project;
- considers cumulative impacts that occur as a result of concurrent projects.

The methodology for the assessment is described in Section 5.

1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

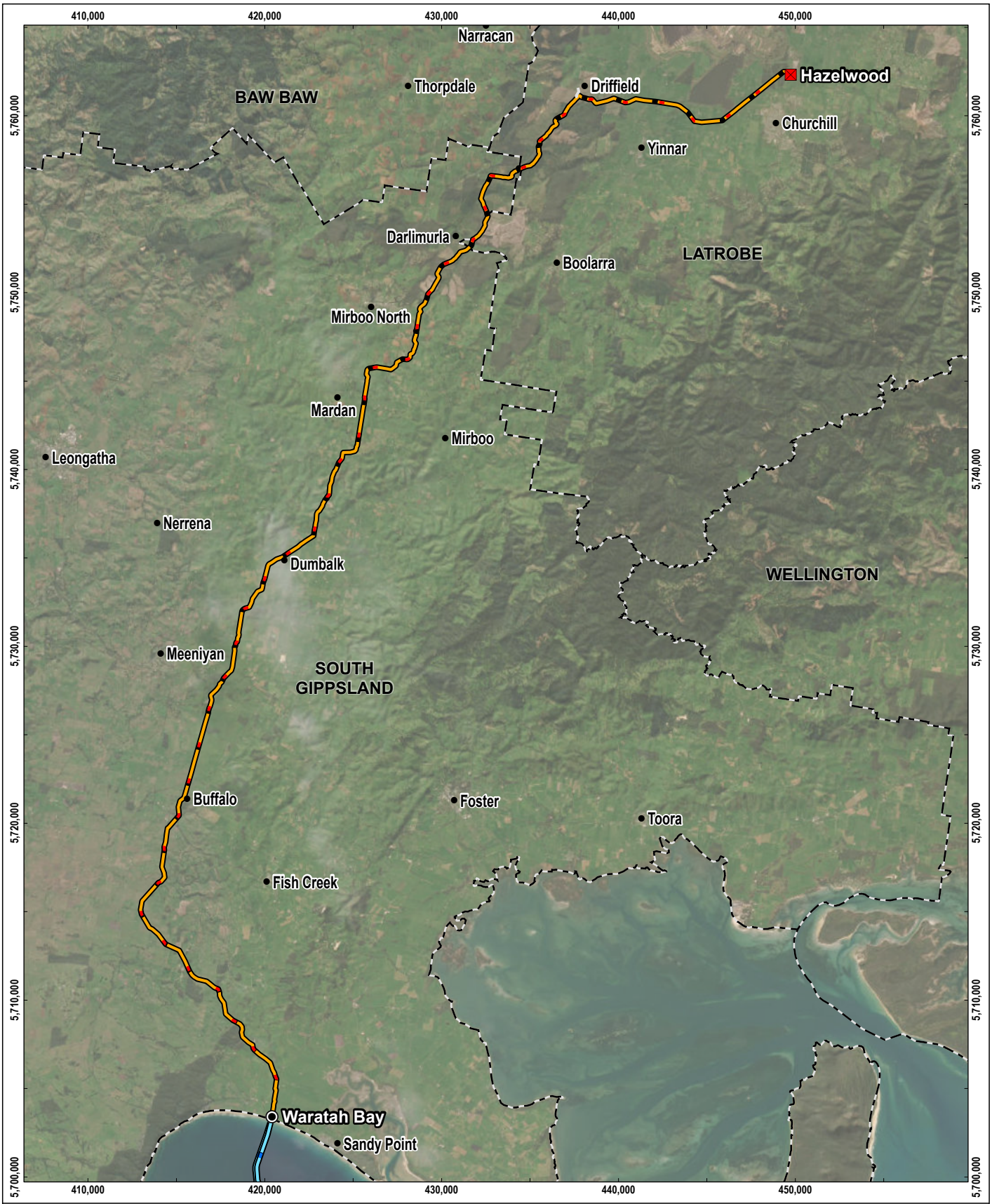
The project is a proposed 1500 megawatt (MW) HVDC electricity interconnector between Heybridge in northwest Tasmania and the Latrobe Valley in Victoria (Figure 1-1). The project is proposed to provide a second link between the Tasmanian renewable energy resources and the Victorian electricity grids enabling efficient energy trade, transmission and distribution from a diverse range of generation sources to where it is most needed, and will increase energy capacity and security across the NEM.

Marinus Link Pty Ltd (MLPL) is the proponent for the project and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tasmanian Networks Pty Ltd (TasNetworks). TasNetworks is owned by the State of Tasmania and owns, operates and maintains the electricity transmission and distribution network in Tasmania.

Tasmania has significant renewable energy resource potential, particularly hydroelectric power and wind energy. The potential size of the resource exceeds both the Tasmanian demand and the capacity of the existing Basslink interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria. The growth in renewable energy generation in mainland states and territories participating in the NEM, coupled with the retiring of baseload coal-fired generators, is reducing the availability of dispatchable generation that is available on demand.

Tasmania's existing and potential renewable resources are a valuable source of dispatchable generation that could benefit electricity supply in the NEM. The project will allow for the continued trading, transmission and distribution of electricity within the NEM. It will also manage the risk to Tasmania of a single interconnector across the Bass Strait and complement existing and future interconnectors on mainland Australia. The project is expected to facilitate the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions at a state and national level.

Interconnectors are a key feature of the future energy landscape. They allow power to flow between different regions to enable the efficient transfer of electricity from renewable energy zones to where the electricity is needed. Interconnectors can increase the resilience of the NEM and make energy more secure, affordable and sustainable for customers. Interconnectors are common around the world including in Australia. They play a critical role in supporting Australia's transition to a clean energy future.



LEGEND

- Landfall
- Converter station

RouteName

- HVDC subsea cable
- Underground HVDC cable
- Cable option not progressing
- Local government area boundary

MARINUS LINK

0 3 6 km

N

SCALE **1:300,000**
PAGE SIZE: **A4**
PROJECTION: **GDA2020 MGA Zone 55**

SOURCE
Proposed route from Tetra Tech Coffey.
LGA boundaries from VICMAP.
Imagery from ESRI Online.

MARINUS LINK PTY LTD

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EIS/EES

FIGURE 1-1

Project overview

TETRA TECH COFFEY

DATE: **27.04.23** PROJECT: **754-MELEN215878ML** FILE: **215878ML_R06_F002_GIS**

SAVED BY: HELEN.UNKOVICH 27.04.23 10:08 AM
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1.3 ASSESSMENT CONTEXT

A social impact is defined as a change that impacts upon the social values, wellbeing and way of life that the residents and stakeholders highly value within a potentially affected community. Examples of social impacts include changes to the local and regional economy from a major project that could lead to positive outcomes such as more employment opportunities or negative outcomes such as reduced viability of industries such as manufacturing.

A social impact assessment is the process of identifying the intended and unintended social consequences of a project. The results of consultation with potentially affected stakeholders will inform the development of each SIA. All potential issues and benefits affecting people within the study areas, either directly or indirectly, are pertinent to SIAs.

2. ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

This section outlines the assessment guidelines relevant to social impacts and the linkages to other EIS/EES technical assessments. A single consolidated EIS/EES is being prepared to address the requirements of the Commonwealth and Victorian jurisdictions, including the requirement for an EES. This report will use the term EIS/EES going forward.

This report applies to the potential social impacts in Victoria only.

2.1 COMMONWEALTH

DCCEEW have published the following guidelines for the EIS: '*Guidelines for the Content of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* – Marinus Link underground and subsea electricity interconnector cable (EPBC 2021/9053)'.

The sections relevant to the SIA include:

- Section 4.2 Description of the existing environment:
- Existing anthropogenic uses of the Bass Strait, including those related to commercial and recreational fisheries, shipping and defence.

Section 5.11 Cumulative Impacts:

The EIS should identify and address cumulative impacts, where potential project impacts are in addition to the existing impact of other activities. Cumulative impacts must be considered in terms of the potential overall consequence or magnitude of impact on each of the MNES. The assessment of cumulative impacts must include the following:

- review and analysis of residual impacts of the proposed development and of other known proposals where there may be a spatial or temporal overlap;
- consideration of the potential for cumulative impacts on the resilience of any important population of listed marine species, migratory species, threatened species and ecological communities and on overall habitat quality and availability; and
- discussion of the potential for existing pressures and threats to be exacerbated by the proposed development.

Section 9 Economic and Social Matters:

The economic and social impacts of the proposed action, both positive and negative, must be analysed and provided in the EIS. Matters of interest may include:

- details of any public consultation activities undertaken, or that will be undertaken, and their outcomes (including identification of affected parties and their views);
- overview of the economic costs and benefits of the project; and employment opportunities expected to be generated by the project (including construction and operational phases); and
- details of the relevant cost and benefits of alternative options to the proposed action.

Section 10 Consultation

Any consultation about the action, including:

- consultation that has taken place;
- proposed consultation about relevant impacts of the action;

- if there has been consultation about the proposed action, any documented response to, or the result of, the consultation; and
- identification of affected parties, including a statement mentioning any communities that may be affected and describing their views.

Section 10.1 Indigenous Engagement

- The EIS should describe a process for ongoing consultation with Indigenous peoples. This must include the following:
- an engagement plan for ongoing consultation throughout the life of the project and how this will be conducted in a culturally appropriate way; and
- information demonstrating that First Peoples have been consulted on all issues outlined in the EIS guidelines.

2.2 TASMANIA

The project's Tasmanian component is being assessed per the EIS guidelines issued by EPA Tasmania for the converter station and shore crossing (September 2022). This assessment is documented in a separate report, Social Impact Assessment: Heybridge Converter Station.

2.3 VICTORIA

The EES Scoping Requirements issued by the Minister for Planning (February 2023) outline the specific matters to be assessed across a number of environmental and social disciplines relevant to the project and to be documented in the EES for the project.

The EES Scoping Requirements inform the scope of the EES technical studies and define the EES evaluation objectives. The EES evaluation objectives identify the desired outcomes to be achieved and provide a framework for an integrated assessment of the environmental effects of a proposed project.

2.3.1 EES evaluation objective

The EES evaluation objective relevant contained in Section 4.4 of the EES scoping requirements that are relevant to this social impact assessment is:

Avoid and, where avoidance is not possible, minimise adverse effects on agriculture, forestry and other land uses, the social fabric of communities, and local infrastructure, businesses and tourism.

2.3.2 EES Scoping requirements

The relevant sections of the EES scoping requirements that this assessment has addressed are summarised in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1 EES scoping requirements relevant to Social Impact Assessment

Aspects to be assessed	Scoping Requirement	Report Section
Key Issues	Potential disruption to existing and/or proposed land uses, with associated economic and social effects, including cumulative impacts.	Section 9
	Potential effects on social cohesion resulting from disruption of existing networks or effects on community services or facilities and recreational activities.	Section 9.2 and 9.4
	Potential economic and social effects from the project, such as through disruption of business, industry (including agriculture, forestry and fisheries) or tourism.	Sections 7.3and 9.3
	Engagement with landowners and land managers.	Section 6
	Disruption to commercial and recreational users of the marine environment.	Section 9.2, 9.3 and the marine ecology and resource use technical study.
	Potential economic and social benefits from the project.	Section 9.3
Existing Environment	Describe the local community and social setting, including community services and facilities, recreational activities, businesses and industries within the area, such as agriculture, forestry, shipping and fisheries.	Section 7
Likely effects	Assess potential social impacts from the project, including interference with the current use of private and public land and community services and facilities in the area.	Section 9
	Assess potential economic effects of the project, considering direct and indirect consequences on employment, local and regional economy and industries in the area, including agriculture, forestry, shipping and fisheries.	Section 9
	Assess the potential impacts of workforce requirements, such as additional demand on housing and public services in the area.	Section 9
	Assess the potential impact on tourism and tourist attractions within the project area and surrounding nature reserves.	Section 9
Mitigation	Outline measures to minimise potential adverse effects of the project and enhance benefits to the community, businesses, industry and land uses.	Section 9
	Describe the approach to engaging with individual landowners during design, construction and operation to minimise disruption to landowner activities.	Section 9
Performance	Describe the framework for monitoring and evaluating the measures implemented to mitigate agriculture, socioeconomic and land use effects and contingencies.	Section 9

2.4 LINKAGES TO OTHER TECHNICAL STUDIES

This SIA relies on the following technical assessments detailed in Table 2-2. As noted by Vanclay (2003), the social, economic, and biophysical domains of an environment are inherently interrelated and 'change to any of these domains leads to changes in the other domains.

Table 2-2 Connections to other technical assessments and reports

Technical assessment	Relevance to this SIA
Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology	The findings and recommendations of the ecological impact assessment have informed the assessment of concerns about potential impacts on significant flora and fauna species.
Technical Appendix L: Air quality	The findings and recommendations of the air quality assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to amenity and character.
Technical Appendix T: Noise and vibration	The findings and recommendations of the noise impact assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to amenity and character.
Technical Appendix R: Landscape and visual	The findings and recommendations of the landscape and visual impact assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to amenity and character.
Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport	The findings and recommendations of the traffic risk assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to the transport network.
Technical Appendix B: Economics	The findings of the economic impact assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to employment, workforce availability, and the forestry industry.
Technical Appendix A: Electromagnetic fields	The findings and recommendations of the EMF assessment described the magnitude of the potential electric and magnetic fields generated by the project and have informed the potential impacts on sensitive receptors.
Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use	The findings and recommendations of the marine ecology and resource use (MERU) assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to fishers' livelihoods in marine ecology.
Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry	The findings and recommendations of the agricultural assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to land use for agricultural production.
Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage	The findings and recommendations of the aboriginal cultural heritage assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to the use of the land to maintain Aboriginal culture and protect important sites.
Technical Appendix S: Land use and planning	The findings and recommendations of the land use and planning assessment have informed the assessment of potential changes to the planning for land use.

3. LEGISLATION, POLICY AND GUIDELINES

There is a range of Victorian state, and local government plans have been used to inform this social impact assessment. Section 6.5.1 provides a detailed overview of these.

The content or methods for completing an SIA are not prescribed by any Victorian or Commonwealth legislation or guidelines. The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) have published a guideline for Social Impact Assessment (Vanclay, Esteves, Aucamp, Franks 2015), which has been used to inform the methodology, content and process adopted in the development of this SIA.

Overall, the methodology and process were also guided by leading practice for SIA, including consideration of:

- Social Impact Assessment Guideline (NSW DPIE February 2023), with regard to the social impact management plan (section 5) and with respect to community engagement and consultation fatigue (Appendix A).
- Technical Supplement – Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects (NSW DPIE February 2023); monitoring and management plan (section 4).
- Coordinator-General's Social Impact Assessment Guideline (QLD DSDILGP, 2018). With regard to the social impact management plan (section 2.3.6) and integration of community and stakeholder engagement (section 2.3.3).
- The supporting guidance shaped the integration of engagement outcomes in response to engagement fatigue and shaped the development of the recommendation for a Social Impact Management Plan and details of the approach and mechanisms to manage social impacts.

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

4.1 OVERVIEW

The project is proposed to be implemented as two 750 MW circuits to meet transmission network operation requirements in Tasmania and Victoria. Each 750 MW circuit will comprise two power cables and a fibre-optic communications cable bundled together in Bass Strait and laid in a horizontal arrangement on land. The two 750 MW circuits will be installed in two stages, with the western circuit being laid first as part of stage one, and the eastern cable in stage two.

The key project components for each 750 MW circuit are, from south to north are:

- HVAC switching station and HVAC-HVDC converter station at Heybridge in Tasmania. This is where the project will connect to the North West Tasmania transmission network being augmented and upgraded by the North West Transmission Developments (NWTD).
- Shore crossing in Tasmania adjacent to the converter station.
- Subsea cable across the Bass Strait from Heybridge in Tasmania to Waratah Bay in Victoria.
- Shore crossing at Waratah Bay approximately 3 km west of Sandy Point.
- Land-sea cable joint where the subsea cables will connect to the land cables in Victoria.
- Land cables in Victoria from the land-sea joint to the converter station site in the Driffield or Hazelwood areas.
- HVAC switching station and HVAC-HVDC converter station at Driffield or at Hazelwood, where the project will connect to the existing Victorian transmission network.

A transition station at Waratah Bay may also be required if there are different cable manufacturers or substantially different cable technologies adopted for the land and subsea cables. The location of the transition station will also house the fibre optic terminal station in Victoria. However, regardless of whether a transition station is needed, a fibre optic terminal station will still be required in the same location.

Approximately 255 kilometres (km) of subsea HVDC cable will be laid across Bass Strait. The preferred technology for the project is two 750 MW symmetrical monopoles using ±320 kV, cross-linked polyethylene insulated cables and voltage source converter technology. Each symmetrical monopole is proposed to comprise two identical-sized power cables and a fibre-optic communications cable bundled together. The cable bundles for each circuit will transition from approximately 300 m apart at the HDD (offshore) exit to 2 km apart in offshore waters.

In Victoria, the shore crossing is proposed to be located at Waratah Bay, with the route crossing at the Waratah Bay–Shallow Inlet Coastal Reserve. From the land-sea joint located behind the coastal dunes, the land cable will extend underground for approximately 90 km to the converter station. From Waratah Bay the cable will run northwest to the Tarwin River Valley and then travel to the north to the Strzelecki Ranges. The route crosses the ranges between Dumbalk and Mirboo North before descending to the Latrobe Valley, where it turns northeast to Hazelwood. The Victorian converter station will be at either a site south of Driffield or Hazelwood adjacent to the existing terminal station.

The land cables will be directly laid in trenches or installed in conduits in the trenches. A construction area of 20 to 36 m wide will be required for laying the land cables and construction of joint bays. Temporary roads for accessing the construction area and temporary laydown areas will also be required to support construction. Where possible, existing roads and tracks will be used for access, for example, farm access tracks or plantation forestry tracks.

Land cables will be installed in ducts under major roads, railways, major watercourses and substantial patches of native vegetation using trenchless construction methods (e.g., HDD) where geotechnical conditions permit. A larger area than the 36 m construction area will be required for the HDD crossings.

The assessment is focused on the Victorian section of the project. This report will inform the EIS/EES being prepared to assess the project's potential environmental effects in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Commonwealth and Victorian governments (see Figure 4-1).

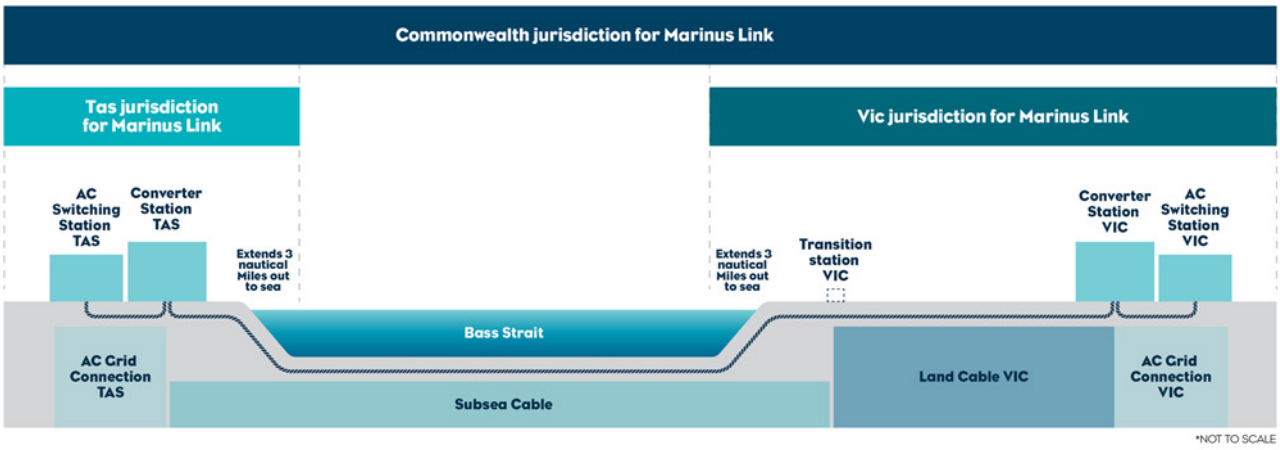


Figure 4-1 Project components considered under applicable jurisdictions (MLPL, 2022).

The project is proposed to be constructed in two stages over approximately five years following the award of works contracts to construct the project. On this basis, stage 1 of the project is expected to be operational by 2030, with Stage 2 to follow, with final timing to be determined by market demand. The project will be designed for an operational life of at least 40 years.

4.2 CONSTRUCTION

Activities that are relevant for assessing the impacts on the potentially affected parties and social values include the shore crossing construction using HDD, transition station construction at Waratah Bay, 90km of land cables installation and converter station construction at a site in either Driffield or Hazelwood.

4.2.1 Transition station

The area of disturbance (AoD) for the construction of the transition station at Waratah Bay is 75 m by 50 m. Site stabilisation works will be required to create a stable base for the transition station. A haul road to access the transition station from Waratah Road will be formed, drained, asphalted, and fenced.

4.2.2 Land Cables

The AoD for the land cables is expected to be a construction corridor of between 20 and 36 m wide for the 90 km length of the corridor and will be comprised of two trenches, a haul road and associated road drainage systems and soil stockpiles. The corridor also includes cable joint pit construction workspaces. The AoD will include the HDD drill pads, access routes to and from each HDD drill pad and laydown areas to accommodate materials, spare parts, parking, site office and amenities.

4.2.3 Converter station

An AoD of up to 35 ha at the Victorian converter site that includes the primary infrastructure, landscaping and laydown areas. This will be at either Driffield or Hazelwood.

4.3 OPERATION

The project will operate 24 hours a day, every day of the year for the expected 40-year operational life span.

The transition station at Waratah Bay will be remotely monitored and will not require onsite staff. Site maintenance activities such as weed control and building inspections will be undertaken according to an asset management schedule.

4.4 DECOMISSIONING

The operational lifespan of the project is a minimum of 40 years. At this time, the project will be either decommissioned or upgraded to extend its operational lifespan.

Requirements at the time will determine the scope of decommissioning activities and impacts. The key objective of decommissioning is to leave a safe, stable and non-polluting environment.

Decommissioning will be planned and carried out in accordance with regulatory and landowner or land manager requirements at the time. A decommissioning plan in accordance with approvals conditions will be prepared prior to the planned end of service and decommissioning of the project.

In the event that the project is decommissioned, all above-ground infrastructure will be removed, and associated land returned to the previous land use or as agreed with the landowner or land manager.

Decommissioning activities required to meet the objective will include, as a minimum, the removal of above-ground buildings and structures. Remediation of any contamination and reinstatement and rehabilitation of the site will be undertaken to provide a self-supporting landform suitable for the end land use. Decommissioning and demolition of project infrastructure will implement the waste management hierarchy principles being avoid, minimise, reuse, recycle and appropriately dispose. Waste management will be in accord with applicable legislation at the time.

Decommissioning activities may include the recovery of land and subsea cables and the removal of land cable joint pits. Recovery of land cables will involve opening the cable joint pits and pulling the land cables out of the conduits, spoiling them onto cable drums and transporting them to metal recyclers for recovery of component materials. The conduits and shore crossing ducts will be left in-situ as removal may significant environmental impact.

The concrete cable joint pits will be broken down to at least one metre below ground level and buried in-situ or excavated and removed. Subsea cables will be recovered by water jetting or removal of rock mattresses or armouring to free the cables from the seabed.

A decommissioning plan will be prepared to outline how activities will be undertaken and potential impacts managed.

5. ASSESSMENT METHOD

This section describes the method that has been used to identify the values and assess the potential social impacts on social values and wellbeing from the project construction, operation and decommissioning activities.

5.1 THE PROCESS

Social impact assessment is the process of analysing and managing the intended and unintended social consequences of a project (Vanclay 2003). The methods used to complete this SIA are shown in

Figure 5-1 and are explained further in the following sections.

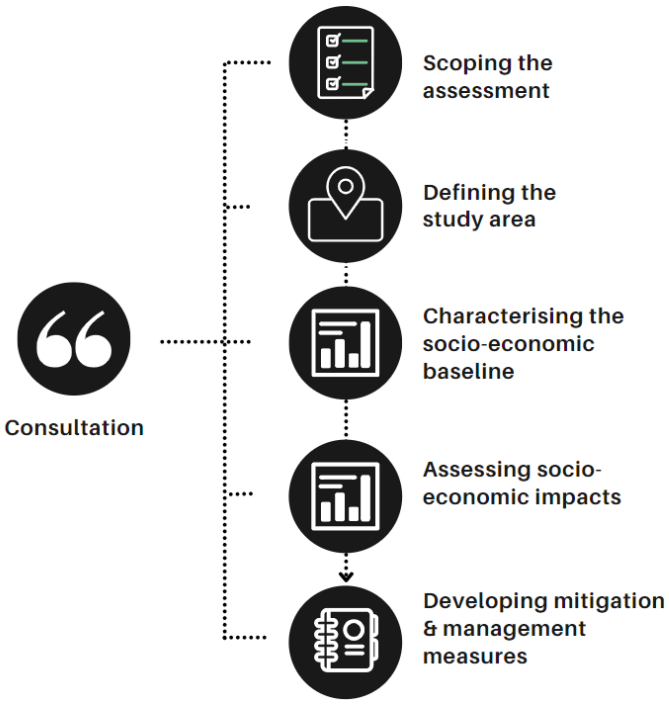


Figure 5-1 Social Impact Assessment procedure

5.2 SCOPING THE ASSESSMENT

The scoping phase of the SIA involved the preliminary identification of the project's potential socio-economic issues, impacts and benefits. The scoping phase provides a basis for identifying the range of issues that will need to be investigated by the SIA. Specifically, the scoping phase provided a framework for:

- the definition of the study area;
- the scope of the baseline, including identifying socio-economic values that may be affected by the project; and
- the identification of key stakeholders for inclusion in SIA consultation.

A review informed the scoping of issues of literature relating to the social context of the study area and the social impacts of linear infrastructure generally and transmission lines in particular:

- the project description as outlined in Section 4.
- the outcomes of stakeholder and community engagement undertaken.

5.3 DEFINING THE STUDY AREA

Study areas define areas potentially affected by a project. The SIA study area encompasses the communities that may experience the effects of the project's construction, operation, and decommission. Consequently, this SIA considers two separate study areas.

- **Local study area:** Includes the transmission route from Waratah Bay to Driffield or Hazelwood and the 18 state suburbs intersected by the project.
- **The regional study area:** Includes the two Victorian local government areas (LGAs) of South Gippsland and Latrobe City intersected by the project.

State and national impacts are considered where relevant.

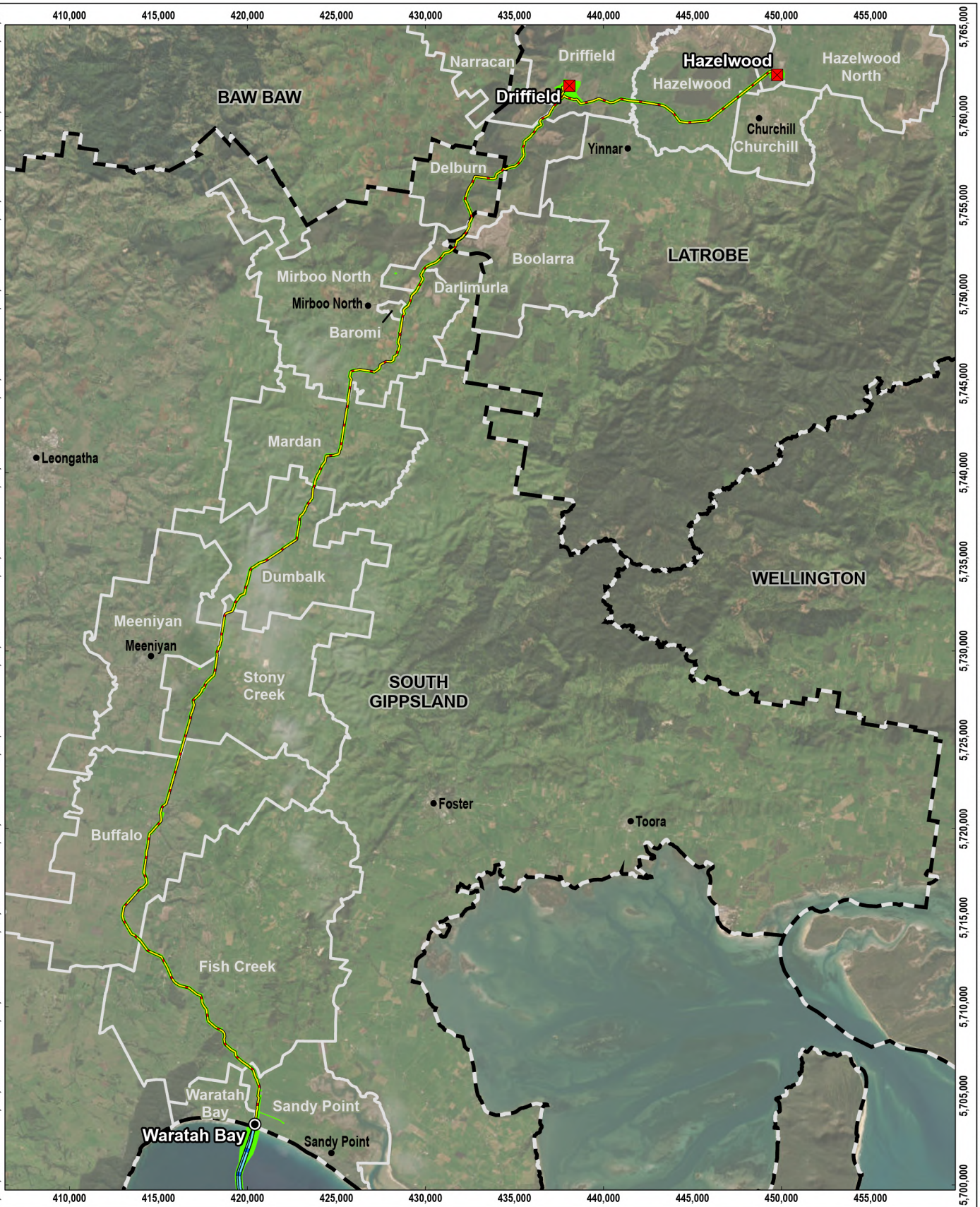
The study areas are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census Statistical Areas (see Table 5-1) to enable the compilation of data on baseline socioeconomic indicators. The statistical areas used for the study area are spatially described in Figure 5-2.

For various demographic indicators, the data collected by the ABS at the state suburb level was subject to high fluctuation levels, primarily due to the size of populations present within each suburb. To account for the variation, data for the local study area is shown as an aggregated whole. However, data at the regional study area is shown at a local government level for the regional study area, to allow for the identification and discussion of any localised trends. The State of Victoria is used as a benchmark or external point of comparison for the data present, which is consistent with the guidance provided by IAIA (Vanclay, Esteves, and Franks 2015).

The assessment of the project also considered the impacts to shipping and fishing activities in the marine study area as defined by Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use. The marine study area covered a 16 km wide area (8 km either side of the project alignment centreline) to assess impacts to commercial fishing activities.

Table 5-1 ABS statistical areas used in this report

Geographic area	ABS Statistical Area	
State	Victoria	
Local government area	South Gippsland	
	Latrobe City Council	
Local study area for the project	**State Suburbs**	
	Baromi	Hazelwood
	Boolarra	Hazelwood North
	Buffalo	Mardan
	Churchill	Meeniyan
	Darlimurla	Mirboo North
	Delburn	Narracan
	Driffield	Sandy Point
	Dumbalk	Stony Creek
	Fish Creek	Waratah Bay



LEGEND

- Landfall
- Converter station

Proposed route

- HVDC subsea cable
- Underground HVDC cable
- Local government area boundary
- State suburb intersecting study area

MARINUS LINK

N

0 3 6 km

SCALE **1:300,000**
PAGE SIZE: **A4**
PROJECTION: **GDA2020 MGA Zone 55**

SOURCE
Proposed route from Tetra Tech Coffey.
LGA boundaries from VICMAP. Suburbs from ABS (2021).
Imagery from ESRI Online.

MARINUS LINK PTY LTD

MARINUS LINK
SIA

FIGURE 5-2

Social study area

TETRA TECH COFFEY

DATE: **23.02.23** PROJECT: **754-MELEN215878ML** FILE: **215878ML_R20_F005.2_GIS**

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5.4 DEVELOPING THE BASELINE

The baseline describes the existing social environment of the study area, including key socio-economic characteristics of the people within it and their living conditions. The baseline is used to form the basis for predicting and assessing the potential social benefits and impacts of the project (Duarte and Sanchez 2020), in line with the social wellbeing framework (see Table 5-2). Baseline information was collected from stakeholder engagement (see Section 6) and a range of secondary sources, including:

- demographic information provided by the ABS;
- selected Commonwealth Government websites (e.g., MySchool; Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES)); relevant Australian and Victorian Government agencies; including the Victorian Dept of Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Health Vic, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA);
- First Peoples plans, including the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country Plan (2015)
- regional and local government plans and strategies;
- grey literature, including industry and news reports; and
- academic literature.

An important requirement of SIA is to have an organising framework that allows for the identification of potential community issues and concerns, as well as conveying the outcomes of the SIA. Tetra Tech Coffey uses an approach based on four identified social values: community identity, economy and livelihoods, infrastructure and services, and people's productive capacities to describe social wellbeing. Table 5-2 describes these values and the attributes and indicators used to understand these within the project's social context. According to Rowan (2009), wellbeing refers to a person's financial, physical, and emotional condition. The social wellbeing framework examines determinants of wellbeing and provides the basis for collecting baseline data and identifying and assessing the project's potential social impacts and benefits.

Table 5-2 Social wellbeing framework

Social value	Attributes and indicators
Community identity Describes how a community defines itself in terms of civic participation, resilience, feelings of trust and safety and a sense of belonging and place	• Social capital and community cohesion • First Peoples' values, cultural diversity and heritage • Character and sense of place • Amenity and landscapes • Land use and natural resources • Ecology • Community safety.
Economy and livelihood Describes how people make a living and the economic structure of the affected community.	• Employment and workforce • Income • Industry and business • Housing affordability and availability • Socio- economic dis/advantage
Infrastructure and services Describes the infrastructure and services that meet the affected community's needs and priorities, including municipal and social infrastructure and associated services.	• Governance (local, state, and national) • Community infrastructure and services (open space, health, education, daycare, aged care, religious) • Physical infrastructure (e.g., transport and municipal) • Housing (social).

Social value	Attributes and indicators
People's productive capacities Describes the skills, knowledge, and experience vital to survival and participation in society and its economy.	• Health – physical and mental • Education, training, and skills • Food security.

Smyth & Vanclay (2017)

5.5 IDENTIFYING THOSE POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE TO CHANGES FROM THE PROJECT

A critical component of developing the baseline is identifying groups that may be vulnerable to changes in the social environment as a consequence of the project's activities (Vanclay, Esteves, and Franks 2015; Vanclay 2003). Vulnerability is commonly defined as the characteristics of a group that influences their 'capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover' (Blaikie et al. 2014) from the social impacts of a project.

Some groups in the community can make use of the opportunities arising from the project, while others are less able and will be more vulnerable to the negative consequences of change. Therefore, this baseline is designed to identify the social attributes and resources that may support vulnerable groups to reach their desired levels of wellbeing and cope with, resist and recover from the impacts of the project and where these groups may lack these attributes and resources (Climent-Gil, Aledo, and Vallejos-Romero 2018).

Groups that experience more significant impacts due to changes in the social environment may be attributed to a range of social characteristics, including limited access to resources such as capital (i.e. income) or other characteristics, such as poorer health or lower mobility.

As this SIA undertakes a social context analysis at a group or aggregate level to consider the regional impacts as required by the EES scoping requirements, potential impacts are not identified for individuals vulnerable to the project's potential impacts. Consequently, vulnerable groups and areas that have higher levels of socio-economic vulnerability have been identified through demographic analysis.

Vulnerable groups at the regional study area level were defined as those who are:

- Within very low and low incomes households (Section 7.3.2).
- Relatively socio-economically disadvantaged as defined by the ABS' Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (SEIFA) (Section 7.3.5).
- Reliant on the affordability of rental housing (Section 7.3.4).
- At risk of exclusion based on cultural identity (Section 7.2), age – youth (Section 7.1.6), ability (Section 7.5) and Indigenous status (Section 7.1.6).

5.6 IDENTIFYING AND PROFILING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Community infrastructure is described as the range of facilities and services that support the creation and development of human and social capital within settlements. Community infrastructure is essential to creating liveable, sustainable, and resilient communities and comprises health, education, open space, sport and recreation, emergency services and social housing. In developing the community infrastructure audit for this study, infrastructure that was within 1km of the easement was identified, in addition to health and emergency infrastructure that supports the communities in the regional study area.

5.7 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION APPROACH

MLPL and technical specialists have undertaken community engagement since mid-2018. These activities are summarised in 5.7.1. In addition, Tetra Tech Coffey undertook consultation specifically to inform this SIA. The details of the SIA-specific consultation are provided in 5.8.

Jointly, the findings of community engagement and SIA consultation have informed the SIA by developing an understanding of the following:

- existing social conditions within the local and regional study area;
- local community values about their area and what places are important to them;
- attitudes towards the project and areas of community concern;
- potential social impacts from the project to inform the impact assessment and identification of management measures; and
- benefits (if any) the community views the project as providing.

5.7.1 Community engagement activities

MLPL commenced its community engagement program for the project in mid-2018. Since this time, a range of community engagement activities has occurred using a variety of engagement methods, including workshops, webinars, pop-up stalls, drop-in sessions, presentations and group meetings.

Phase 1 – Mid-2018 to late 2019
The objectives of this phase of engagement were to:

- raise awareness about the project; and
- support the Feasibility Study, Business Case Assessment and Regulatory Investment for Transmission (RIT-T) processes. The RIT-T is a cost-benefit analysis.

Engagement throughout this phase included meetings, workshops and information sessions, as well as regular print and digital communications.

Phase 2 – Early 2020 to early 2022
In November 2020, MLPL began engaging with Gippsland landowners to introduce MLPL and consult around the proposed route. Engagement focused on face-to-face meetings, with several landowners also taking the opportunity to drop in at the public community information sessions and webinars.

Engagement with the broader Victorian public started in early 2021 and focused on raising awareness of the project, capturing feedback on the proposed route and promoting the benefits for Victoria.

From August 2021, the engagement focus shifted to raising awareness about the upcoming Commonwealth and Victorian environmental planning and assessment referrals. COVID-19 restrictions continued to limit on-the-ground engagement, so engagement activities were undertaken virtually. MLPL worked with local Gippsland organisations to participate in their existing online meetings and organised webinars for the broader community and environmental and community groups.

The project returned to face-to-face engagement in late 2021, with MLPL team members attending local community markets in Traralgon, Leongatha and Mirboo North (in early 2022) to raise awareness about the project and the planning and assessment process.

MLPL established a Gippsland Stakeholder Liaison Group in late 2021 with an independent Chair. This group meets quarterly to share information, issues and ensure the project aligns with key regional priorities.

Summary of main stakeholder forums:

- **Gippsland Stakeholder Liaison Group (GSLG):** The GSLG comprises representatives from a range of local organisations who will provide input into initiatives to maximise the project's benefits, including local economic development plans and the project's local benefit sharing approach.
- **Consumer Advisory Panel:** The Marinus Link Consumer Advisory Panel (CAP) provides a key forum for engaging NEM customers on the Marinus Link Revenue Proposal. The CAP is a requirement of the Australian Energy Regulator and aims to ensure that consumers' needs are considered in the project and reflected in our revenue proposal.
- **Landowner Engagement:** Dedicated landowner engagement started in Early 2021 and assisted in informing the route alignment. More than 700 meetings have been held with landowners between early 2021 and April 2023.
- **First Peoples Advisory Group:** In the Gippsland region, MLPL is working closely with First Peoples. MLPL have established a forum where representatives of the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation come together to discuss the project.

5.8 SIA CONSULTATION APPROACH

The scoping phase identified the range of potential social impacts and provided the basis for identifying the stakeholders for inclusion in the SIA consultation. The social wellbeing framework described in Section 5.4 is also used to identify stakeholders who may be impacted or are able to provide input about potential impacts; for instance, community housing organisations provide valuable input about the availability of affordable housing in the study area.

Consultation for the project SIA involved one-on-one structured qualitative interviews with key stakeholders. Stakeholder lists were developed by Tetra Tech Coffey in consultation with MLPL and included registered groups and associations across the community, service providers and targeted sectors such as local government and recreation associations, individuals and representatives of community organisations. Stakeholders invited to participate include:

- local governments and local business associations;
- emergency services;
- housing stakeholders (real estate agents and emergency accommodation providers);
- First Peoples (Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation);
- marine and fisheries stakeholders including peak bodies, recreation and game fishing associations, and project and service providers (oil, energy and telco);
- representatives from community organisations, recreation groups, conservation organisations, and youth groups; and
- landholders.

The SIA consultation has followed the ethics protocols as outlined in *Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for Assessing and Managing the Social Impacts of Projects* (Vanclay, 2015) and the interim Engaging with First Peoples and Communities on Assessments and Approvals under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth).

5.9 IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING IMPACTS

An SIA looks beyond impacts on individual property rights and looks more at groups of people that make up the community. Therefore, the more groups of people that share similar characteristics that are affected by the proposal then, the greater the social impact.

5.9.1 Impact identification and description

The impact identification phase involved a review of the potential socio-economic issues, impacts and benefits identified during the scoping phase. Impact identification is focused on understanding how project-related activities may result in changes in socio-economic values. A social impact occurs when these changes are experienced by people and communities (Slootweg, Vanclay, and Van Schooten 2001). The project's impact pathways were identified through:

- Consideration of the proposed activities for the project construction, operation and decommissioning (Section 4).
- Consideration of key areas of concern identified during SIA consultation and community engagement.
- Review of relevant literature on the socio-economic impacts of linear energy and similar infrastructure.
- The professional judgement of the SIA study team.
- The findings of other technical studies (Section 2.4).

5.9.2 Impact assessment approach

A significance-based approach was used to assess potential project impacts on the identified social values. This approach uses the principles of social sensitivity and magnitude of impact to assess the significance of an impact. These are defined further below.

A key consideration in assessing impacts are the principles of ecologically sustainable development, where the identification and assessment of impacts and development of environmental performance requirements:

- Considers the potential for short- and long-term effects on the socio-economic environment and develops mitigation and management measures, as detailed in Section 5.9.6.
- Considers how socio-economic values can be maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations and
- Adopts the precautionary principle and proactively implements mitigation measures where there is uncertainty regarding potential impacts on socioeconomic values.

This SIA and the EIS/EES are precautionary in nature, as they use a conservative approach or assume that impacts will be experienced as a worst-case scenario. Where impacts or sensitivity may be classified between two levels, the higher or greater level of sensitivity or magnitude has been selected.

SIA and the sensitivity and magnitude rating assignment are subjective and a matter of professional judgment. Similarly, the technical studies that are used to inform the SIA (see Section 2.4) apply a range of techniques (for example, traffic engineering and visual impact assessment) to support an assessment of the significance of impacts within their disciplinary area. The sensitivity and magnitude criteria cannot be compared across technical studies, and as such, the criteria used to measure the significance of social impacts will differ from those used in the technical studies.

5.9.3 Sensitivity criteria

Social sensitivity to change is determined with respect to its uniqueness or rarity, importance and resilience to change. These contributing factors are described below.

- **Uniqueness or rarity** of a place or service is an assessment of its occurrence, abundance and distribution within and beyond its reference area (e.g., local government area, Gippsland region of Victoria).
- **Importance** of a place or service considers the level of value attributed to a place or service by receivers. Importance may be indicated by conservation status, cultural importance (e.g., use in festivals), or economic value.
- **Resilience to change** is determined by the extent to which a place, service or receiver can cope with or withstand changes without affecting the level of value.
- **Replacement potential** is the potential for a representative or equivalent place or service can be found to replace any losses.

The criteria for determining social sensitivity are set out in Table 5-3 below.

Table 5-3 Social sensitivity criteria

Level	Community Value
Extremely sensitive	An aspect of the social environment has been identified as essential to livelihoods, health, safety or culture in the impact assessment process.
	The place or service was identified by the community as a matter of critical importance. The place or service subject to change may: • Be listed on a recognised or statutory state register. • Contributes to community events or uses at a national or state level. • Contributes to the national or state economy in terms of the number of jobs or gross domestic product.
	There are no accessible or available alternative services or places for people at a state or national level.
Very sensitive	An aspect of the social environment has been identified to contribute materially to livelihoods, health, safety or culture in the impact assessment process.
	The place or service was identified by the community as a matter of high importance. The place or service subject to change may: • be listed on a recognised or statutory state register. • contribute to community events or uses at a state or regional level. • contribute to the state or regional economy in terms of number of jobs or gross domestic product.
	The place, service, or receiver has limited capacity to adapt to change.
	It is not widely distributed throughout the system/area, and consequently, recovery potential would be limited.
	There are no regionally available alternative services.
Sensitive	An aspect of the social environment has been identified by the community to contribute to livelihoods, health, safety or culture in the impact assessment process.
	The place or service was identified by the community as a matter of moderate importance. The place or service subject to change may: • be listed on a recognised or statutory state or local register. • contribute to community events or uses at a regional or local level. • contribute to the state or regional economy in terms of number of jobs or gross domestic product.
	There are no locally available alternative services or places available; however, alternative services or places are available and have capacity at a regional level.
Not very sensitive	An aspect of the social environment that is recognised by the local community, but it is seen to have limited use or has limited importance to the broader community.
	The place or service is valued by groups within the community. The place or service may: • be listed on a recognised or statutory local register.

Level	Community Value
	• contribute to community events or uses at a local level by groups within the community. • contribute to the local economy in terms of a small number of jobs.
	There is a slightly detectable response to the change in the value, but it can quickly recover.
	There are alternative services or places available at a local level.
Not sensitive	An aspect of the social environment that is not valued within the community.
	The place or service that the community or groups within the community have identified as a matter of importance. The place or service: • is not listed on a recognised or statutory local register. • does not contribute to community events or uses at a local level by groups within the community. • does not contribute to the local economy.
	There are many alternative services or places available at a local level.

5.9.4 Magnitude criteria

The magnitude of an impact on a social value considers the scale, affected population, duration, and likelihood that an impact will occur. These criteria are described below.

- **Severity** is the scale or degree of change from the existing condition. This could be positive or negative.
- **Affected population** is an assessment of the distribution of the effect amongst the population of affected people and identifies where there may be disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups.
- **Duration** is the time over which the impact or opportunity is expected to affect people.

The criteria for determining the magnitude of impacts on social values are set out in Table 5-4.

Table 5-4 Social magnitude criteria

	Level				
Criteria	Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Severity	Marginal change from baseline conditions. Those affected would not notice the change.	A small but measurable change from the baseline condition. Consequences on livelihoods, health or other social values that cause change to aspects of a social value; however, the social aspect will generally continue to provide the same level of social value to the community.	A noticeable change from the baseline conditions. Consequences on livelihoods, health or other social values that cause damage to aspects of a social value. The social aspect may continue to provide some of its social functions, but these are noticeably changed (diminished or enhanced).	A considerable change from baseline conditions. Consequences on livelihoods, health or other social values that cause considerable change to aspects of a social value. The social aspect provides very few or considerably more social functions to the community.	A fundamental change from the baseline conditions. The change to livelihoods, health, safety, culture or other social value means that the social aspect is fundamentally changed and no longer holds the value it previously provided to the community.
Affected population	Affects a small number of individuals.	Affects a small section of the community area or a small but notable proportion of a vulnerable group.	Affects notable proportions of people within the community or affects significant proportions of a vulnerable group.	Affects large groups of people across the community and beyond this area or affects a majority of a vulnerable group.	Affects a noticeable proportion of the population across the area of impact and surrounding region or affects most people within a vulnerable group.
Duration	The effect is temporary (e.g., it lasts less than a month).	The effect is short term and is often intermittent (e.g., the effect may occur for longer than a month but is expected to last less than six months).	The effect is medium term (e.g., it is expected to last longer than six months and less than one year).	The effect long term (e.g., the effect is expected to last between one and five years).	The effect is permanent or will not cease for greater than five years.

5.9.5 Assessment of impacts

The significance of impacts on a social value is determined by the sensitivity of the value itself and the magnitude of the change it experiences. Table 5-5 shows how using the criteria described above, the significance of impacts is determined having regard to the sensitivity of the environmental value and the magnitude of the expected change.

This matrix is also used to assess both the impacts and benefits that will arise from the construction of the project.

Table 5-5 Assessment of significance of impacts

Magnitude of impact	Sensitivity of social value				
	Extremely sensitive	Very sensitive	Sensitive	Not very sensitive	Not sensitive
Severe	Major	Major	Major	High	Moderate
Major	Major	Major	High	Moderate	Low
Moderate	High	High	Moderate	Low	Low
Minor	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Low	Very low
Negligible	Moderate	Low	Low	Very Low	Very low

5.9.6 Environmental performance requirements and residual impact assessment

EPRs set out the environmental and social outcomes that must be achieved during the design, construction, operation and decommissioning of the project. Compliance with EPRs is intended to minimise impacts and the risk of harm to the environmental, social and cultural values to within reasonable limits having regard to contextual factors and the practical delivery of the project.

In order to develop EPRs relating to the social impacts of the project, industry-standard approaches, leading practices and the latest international approaches to social impact management have been considered. EPRs are also informed by the legislative and regulatory environment pertaining to the relevant jurisdictions. In addition, project-specific measures are recommended to minimise impacts or risks to identified social values.

This performance-based approach allows for flexibility in how a specified outcome is achieved rather than providing prescriptive measures that must be employed. It allows contractors and MLPL to determine the best way to achieve EPRs and manage impacts whilst developing and optimising their design solutions.

Potential management measures were identified to demonstrate how the magnitude of potential impacts occurring could be reduced and to inform the development of EPRs. Mitigation measures were identified for impacts assessed as having an impact ranking of major, high or moderate with only standard controls applied. Example management measures are based on experience from other infrastructure projects and, where appropriate, have been informed by other technical studies being completed for the EIS/EES. Other key considerations for the development of EPRs are recommendations made by key agencies and the findings of community engagement and SIA consultation.

The residual impact assessment presented in this SIA assumes the implementation of management measures to comply with EPRs. Justification is provided to demonstrate how the management measures serve to reduce the impact ranking.

5.9.7 Cumulative impact assessment

The EIS guidelines and EES scoping requirements both include requirements for the assessment of cumulative impacts. Cumulative impacts result from incremental impacts caused by multiple projects occurring at similar times and within proximity to each other.

To identify possible projects that could result in cumulative impacts, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) guidelines on cumulative impacts have been adopted. The IFC guidelines (IFC, 2013) define cumulative impacts as those that 'result from the successive, incremental, and/or combined effects of an action, project, or activity when added to other existing, planned, and/or reasonably anticipated future ones.'

The approach for identifying projects for assessment of cumulative impacts considers:

- Temporal boundary: the timing of the relative construction, operation and decommissioning of other existing developments and/or approved developments that coincides (partially or entirely) with the project.
- Spatial boundary: the location, scale and nature of the other approved or committed projects expected to occur in the same area of influence as the project . The area of influence is defined as the spatial extent of the impacts a project is expected to have.

Proposed and reasonably foreseeable projects were identified based on their potential to credibly contribute to cumulative impacts due to their temporal and spatial boundaries. Projects were identified based on publicly available information at the time of assessment. The projects considered for cumulative impact assessment in Victoria are:

- Delburn Wind Farm;
- Star of the South Offshore Wind Farm;
- Offshore wind development zone in Gippsland including Greater Gippsland Offshore Wind Project (BlueFloat Energy), Seadragon Project (Floatation Energy), Greater Eastern Offshore Wind (Corio Generation);
- Hazelwood Rehabilitation Project;
- Wooreen Energy Storage System.

5.9.7.1 Method

The cumulative impacts that may result from this project in conjunction with other proposed and reasonably foreseeable future projects have been assessed.

The management of social impacts will need to address the peaks in the construction workforce relating to the terrestrial construction activities in Victoria in the context of other large-scale infrastructure construction projects in the region. The significance assessment method used to identify the residual impacts of the proposed project in Section 8 has been used to assess the cumulative socioeconomic impacts.

The assessment of potential cumulative socioeconomic impacts for each of the affected values is described below. Mitigation or management strategies have been proposed to inform further action that is outside the direct control of the project to manage cumulative impacts.

The approach to cumulative impact assessment follows Therivel and Ross (2007). This is essentially an adaptive environmental management approach, in this case, through ongoing proactive use of management plans involving monitoring, evaluation, and mitigation. Consequently, management measures for the monitoring and mitigation of cumulative impacts have been indicated as requirements of the social impact management plan (EPR S01).

5.9.7.2 Limitations

There are a number of limitations that apply to the cumulative impact assessment. The aggregation of information on multiple developments surrounding the project area is challenging and, in some cases, not obtainable due to the lack of availability and adequacy of publicly available data and information for other projects. Where uncertainty exists regarding the spatial or temporal context of other projects, a conservative approach was adopted, e.g., assuming the timing of the construction phase of a proposed or reasonably foreseeable project entirely within the Gippsland region overlaps with the project timing.

5.10 LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

This SIA should be read with the following limitations:

- Tetra Tech Coffey has relied on information from a range of secondary sources. Except where stated, Tetra Tech Coffey has not attempted to verify the accuracy or completeness of this information.
- This SIA was undertaken at a point in time. Communities and people within communities change, residents move, businesses start, or close, and other external socioeconomic factors may result in changes not captured by this report. This SIA study was undertaken after the COVID-19 pandemic and this affected several baseline conditions in the local and regional study area, including:
  - Increased demand in the construction sector due to a range of socioeconomic factors.
  - Changes in the demand experienced in the retail, tourism, and accommodation sectors.
  - Changes in health service and emergency service planning and activity.
  - Changes in general wellbeing, including increased anxiety, worry, and loneliness.
- Similarly, this SIA includes information gained from consultation with key stakeholders and the findings of broader community consultation based on their views expressed during consultation. These views may change over time or in response to other changes in the socioeconomic environment.
- Changes to baseline conditions may affect the sensitivity of social values to change or result in changes to project activities that otherwise result in changes to the magnitude of social impacts. This introduces a level of uncertainty in assessing the potential socioeconomic impacts and benefits of the project.
- This SIA and the assessment of the magnitude of some social impacts are based on the findings of other studies, as outlined in Section 2.4.
- Credible non-project activities that could contribute to a cumulative impact on the valued environmental, social and cultural components will be identified and then assessed for their spatial and temporal relationship to the project to determine if cumulative impacts are possible and, if possible, significant. Management strategies where the project could contribute to a significant cumulative impact will be proposed. Cumulative impacts are outlined in Section 9.8.

6. COMMUNITY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

6.1.1 Project engagement

The SIA draws from the stakeholder engagement feedback from key community engagement activities. A summary of areas of interest/concern raised by stakeholders between February 2021 and December 2022 is detailed in Table 6-1.

The Summary of Community Stakeholder Engagement Report July 2018 – December 2022 is available on MLPL's website for more information.

Table 6-1 Community engagement activities from February 2021 – December 2022

Event	Dates	Attendance	Details	Areas of community interest
Phase 2: Focus of engagement: Raising awareness for the project (February 2021 – August 2022)				
Sandy Point Information Session	February 2021	35	A group discussion with community members from locations across the project area.	• Construction impacts • Foreign ownership • Location of route • Project funding
Mirboo North Information Session	February 2021	90	A group discussion with community members from locations across the project area.	• Environment • Jobs and local benefits • Project funding • Transition to renewable energy
Meeniyan Information Session	March 2021	30	A group discussion with community members from locations across the project area.	• Project funding • Foreign ownership • Location of route • Construction impacts
Morwell Information Session	March 2021	20	A group discussion with community members from locations across the project area.	• Construction methodology/impacts • Cost to customers • Jobs • Ongoing maintenance • Project timeline • Technical details
Webinar	February 2021	26	Online webinar session detailing the general project and construction information, consultation process, renewable energy connections, EIS/EES process and land use.	• Connection to renewable energy developments • Converter station details (cost, size) • Construction staging • Consultation process to date • Cost benefit • EIS/EES process • Future land use • Location of route • Underground vs overhead transmission
Farm World Information Stall	March 2021	200	Areas of interest identified at the stall comprised construction methodologies, Tasmanian renewable energy, Jobs, location of alignment, timeframe and	• Construction methodology • Enabling Tasmania's renewable energy resources • Jobs • Location of route

Event	Dates	Attendance	Details	Areas of community interest
			general and technical project information.	• Project timelines and approvals • Reinstatement • Technical details of cables • Transition for Gippsland
Latrobe Valley Authority Briefing	August 2021	NA	General project overview workshop.	• Project overview • Economic development and job opportunities • Community benefits
GROW Gippsland and Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce workshop	August 2021	N/A	General project overview workshop with local economic support groups.	• Project overview • Economic development and job opportunities • Community benefits
Phase 2: Focus of engagement: Planning and assessment (September 2021 to February 2022)				
Community webinar	October 2021	32	Online meeting with community members across Victoria examining areas of community interest.	• Battery storage • Transition station location • Tasmanian assessment process • Construction impacts • Timing for Request for Tender
Gippsland Climate Change Network	October 2021	N/A	Project briefing.	• About the project • Planning and assessment process
Committee for Gippsland	October 2021	N/A	Project briefing.	• About the project • Planning and assessment process
Gippsland Stakeholder Liaison group meetings	October 2021 February 2022 October 2022 December 2022	N/A	Gippsland community stakeholder liaison group developed by MLPL. Quarterly meetings to discuss various project topics and community concerns.	• Planning and assessment process • Economic development work • Project benefits and timeline • EIS/EES approvals • Project design
Stalls at farmers' markets in Traralgon, Leongatha and Mirboo North	November 2021 (Traralgon) December 2021 (Leongatha) January 2022 (Mirboo North)	300 150 250	Information discussions.	Key topics at all markets included: • overall project • transition to renewable energy • project locations • construction impacts • marine environment impacts
Phase 3: Engagement focus: Design and approvals (February 2022 to December 2022)				
Pop-up stands at Mirboo North Market, Farm World and Fish Creek Tea Cosy Festival	February 2022 (Mirboo North) March 2022 (Farm World) May 2022 (Fish Creek)	426 combined community interactions	Information stands at markets.	Common areas of community concern throughout the three stalls were: • general project • timeline • technical cable questions • construction impacts • route alignment

Event	Dates	Attendance	Details	Areas of community interest
				• renewable energy • impact management.
Dumbalk drop-in session	May 2022	16	Open meeting attended by community members	• Impacts on organic certification • Haulage routes • Project stages • Construction timeline • Ise of Mardan farm • Impacts on native wildlife
Careers expos in Melbourne, Baw Baw, Federation University and the local learning and employment network (LLEN)	July 2022 (Melbourne and Baw Baw), August 2022 (Federation University), October 2022 (LLEN)	8,420 combined interactions	Pop-up stands at careers and jobs expos.	• Economic-centric information presentation discussing general project questions, project purposes, job opportunities, route alignment and renewable energy benefits.
Gippsland New Energy Conference	August 2022	72	Engagement with Gippsland New Energy. Presentation and pop-up stand.	• Overall • Timeline and route alignment • Construction impacts • Impacts at Waratah Bay and impact management
Webinars	August 2022	29	To support the public release of draft EES guidelines and public comment period	• Impacts on habitat and towns • Locations of infrastructure • Construction impacts • Emission mitigation • Cost rationale • Job and local business opportunities • Community benefits.
Drop-in sessions at Sandy Point and Meeniyan	September 2022	22	Project update drop-in sessions	• The project's connection to offshore wind projects • Policy • Various general and technical project questions.
MLPL First Peoples meetings	September 2022 December 2022	6	Group meetings discussing the project.	• First session spoke about the advisory group role and requirements as well as jobs and economic opportunities and engagement approach. • Second session involved talks with the EIS/EES studies, cultural heritage and sustainability framework.
Consumer Advisory Panel workshop	October 2022	23	Workshop centred around community and project benefits	• Community and project benefits
South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA) presentation	October 2022	20		• Local commercial fishing company discussing depth of under-sea cables and associated anchor damage, ongoing maintenance and future engagement.

Event	Dates	Attendance	Details	Areas of community interest
Pop-up stands at Mirboo North and Foster	October 2022 (Mirboo North) November 2022 (Foster)	60 combined interactions	Pop-up stands to provide community members with updates.	Topics raised included: • road access during construction • impacts on nearby farms • future renewable energy capacity and needs • offshore wind project relation • electricity costs.
Engineers Australia Forum presentation	October 2022	35	Presentation to engineering forum.	• General project, timeline, technical converter station and cable and system questions, route alignment, construction details and employment opportunities.
GROW Gippsland advisory group meeting	December 2022	N/A	Economic-themed meeting involving job opportunities and skills pathways.	• Job opportunities and skill pathways.

Source: Marinus Link, 2023. Summary Community and Stakeholder Engagement Report

6.1.2 Landowner engagement

MLPL has undertaken extensive engagement with potentially affected landowners along the project alignment within the survey area. A summary of the engagement is detailed below in Table 6-2. The outcomes of this engagement have informed the scoping of this study and understanding of key issues for the community in which the project is located.

Table 6-2 Landowner engagement November 2020 to April 2023

Communication method	Number of interactions
Phone calls	1154
Meetings	728
Emails	308
SMS	204
Other	70

In addition, feedback obtained during consultation to inform the agriculture technical assessment (EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry) has also played a crucial role in shaping this assessment. This consultation involved conducting on-farm meetings and subsequent follow-up phone calls to clarify points discussed during the meetings.

During this consultation, a prevalent concern emerged among landowners regarding the uncertain impacts of agricultural production activities in both the short term (during the construction phase) and the long-term sustainability of production. The importance of closely engaging with landowners and customising mitigation measures to suit each individual landowner's situation was acknowledged as a vital approach to minimise these impacts and alleviate landowner concerns.

Regarding the specific impacts, they closely align with the feedback received from the MLPL consultation conducted thus far and the interviews conducted as part of the SIA. Key themes that emerged included concerns related to biosecurity, the existing natural landscape, with a specific focus on the steepness of slopes, potential risks of erosion, seasonal agricultural practices, land usage for horticulture, as well as the presence of current and planned infrastructure such as buildings, structures, internal roads, and farm laneways.

6.1.3 First Peoples engagement

MLPL has established a First Peoples Advisory Group, providing a forum for representatives of the Boonwurrung Land and Sea Council, Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to come together to discuss the project.

The First Peoples Advisory Group facilitates ongoing conversations between First Peoples in Gippsland related to the impacts and opportunities of the project.

It provides MLPL with valuable information and advice regarding issues pertinent to Aboriginal Peoples living in Gippsland, including matters related to environmental approvals and social licence processes. The group also provides improved cultural exchange, understanding and capacity-building opportunities.

MLPL will work in partnership with Aboriginal organisations and people through all stages of the project via the Advisory Group, directly with First Peoples' Groups and through Aboriginal Leaders and business groups. Opportunities are being explored across employment, procurement, environmental protection, offsets and rehabilitation and cultural heritage.

Participants' responses to the questions about the project were analysed according to the social wellbeing framework (Table 5-2). A summary of the key themes raised in the SIA engagement, and which have been used to inform the social baseline, is presented in Table 6-3.

6.1.4 SIA Consultation

Independent consultation with key stakeholders and directly affected landowners was undertaken to inform the SIA. Participants' responses to the questions about the project were analysed according to the social wellbeing framework (Table 5-2). A summary of the key themes raised in the SIA engagement, and which have been used to inform the social baseline, is presented in Table 6-3.

Below is a summary of consultation process.

Landowners

A stratified and randomised sample of 10% of land uses intersected by the project alignment was identified. Landholders or land managers were invited to participate in the SIA consultation program. On 6 February 2023, 35 invitations were sent to stakeholders by registered post inviting them to participate in the SIA engagement. Stakeholders received a 32-page information brochure describing the project. To minimise the amount of landholders' time taken up with interviews, landowners who were identified to participate in the agricultural study were not directly approached to participate in the SIA. Relevant feedback shared by stakeholders during the agricultural study engagement was considered as part of the SIA (EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry).

A small number of stakeholders responded to the opportunity to participate in the SIA.

Broader community and local government

On 8 February 2023, 112 email invitations to participate in the SIA consultation were sent to stakeholders, including recreation groups, community groups, local government authorities, tourism bodies and real estate agents. A small number of these stakeholders participated in the SIA consultation.

The interview process was used to confirm existing baseline information, the perceived potential impacts, and potential benefits, as well as potential management and mitigation measures. Questions asked were designed to allow participants to talk about what they felt was important. The participant's responses and questions dictated the flow of the conversation.

Traditional Owner engagement

MLPL has a strong focus on First Peoples consultation and collaboration. The SIA team attended the MLPL First Peoples Advisory Group in December 2023. One-on-one interviews were also carried out with advisory group members to further inform the SIA process, with feedback focusing on maximising opportunities for existing First Peoples businesses in both the construction and operations phases while balancing the protection of ecology, totem species and cultural heritage. Feedback was also received about the importance of allowing adequate time for Elders to consider project information and offering long-term community benefit initiatives to any directly impacted First Peoples communities. First Peoples have also been consulted for EIS/EES Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural and this feedback was also reviewed as part of the SIA process.

Fisheries and marine engagement

Fifty-three marine and fisheries industry stakeholders were invited to participate in the SIA interviews with questions focused on the impacts and opportunities for their industry. South East Trawl Fishing Industry Association (SETFIA) sent a text to their members encouraging participation in the SIA consultation.

An email invitation was also sent to stakeholders on 13 June 2023. In addition, follow-up calls were made to a number of recreational bodies and associations.

The interview process focused on understanding potential impacts, potential benefits, and potential management and mitigation measures. Questions asked were designed to allow participants to talk about what they felt was important. The participant's responses and questions dictated the flow of the conversation.

Table 6-3 Feedback from participants in the SIA engagement

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
Community identity		
Landscape and amenity	Visual amenity is very important to people, and they are concerned about losing that lifestyle. Highly valued landscapes include agricultural areas, conservation reserves and natural bushlands and beaches. "*Don't want to see spaghetti lines across the landscape."* *"Concerns about the loss of visual amenity due to the pace of change in the renewable energy and infrastructure space."*	Community Representative, Community Organisation, Landholders
	Special places: the beaches including corner Inlet, Wilson's Promontory Sandy Point and Waratah Bay; Strzelecki Ranges; rail trails; Mirboo North State Forest; Lyrebird forest walk and Little Morwell River. *"The beach and our farm."*	Community Representative and Community Organisation
	Amenity impacts from construction activities such as dust, noise (during construction and converter stations when operational, *what happens "if the alarms sound at night and can't get hold of the company*)", and disruption to lives and livelihoods.	Community Representative, Landholder and Recreational Group
	Access to recreation areas, including the rail trails, forests and beaches between Sandy Point and Waratah Bay. *I am a resident of Sandy Point and a mad keen fisherman.* *"When the desalination plant was being constructed, we had an influx of people* [workers] *wanting to go fishing – boating ramps were crowded and locals couldn't get their boats launched."*	Healthcare Service Provider, Community Representative, Community Organisation, Landholders
Cultural diversity	Indigenous heritage "*needs to be identified with People and respected*."	Community representative
	"General concern that outsiders do not share the same values."	Community Organisation

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
	Completing Cultural Heritage assessments and Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) and strictly adhering to any recommendations from these are – important to ensuring any land or sea-based impacts to heritage values are minimised.	First Peoples organisation representative
	Consider cultural heritage 'oceanside', as well as on land	First Peoples organisation representative
Social capital and community cohesion	Strong sense of community *and passionate about protecting it*. Close-knit, thriving and proud community. *"It's a good and giving community."*	Recreational Group, Community Representative and Landholders
Character and sense of place	Strong identification with sporting clubs. A very rural community with tightly held generational farms. "*The community values its regional lifestyle, is quite proud of its unique flavour and very keen on separation from the city*."	Recreational Group, Community Organisation and Landholders
Ecology	Concerns about the protection of habitat values, flora and fauna species, including burrowing crayfish, frogs in/near waterways, greater gliders, powerful owls, the Strzelecki koala and lace monitor.	Community Representative
Character and sense of place	The route: The first plan that came out in January last year – didn't touch our property. It went through the dairy farm across the road, so they swapped and put it in our place instead. The new plan goes through the front of our house; they need to come up with a better option. Plans also provide for a third cable – it may as well be going through the house. Will go through our driveway – so we won't be able to get in and out of the property. Only temporary but still a fact. The route cuts our farm in half. The loss of future development rights, such as subdividing to lifestyle properties. Localised impacts on native vegetation and habitat. Sterilisation of people's land Removal of trees planted by Landcare groups on farms	Local Government Authority, Community Representative and Landowner
	Opportunity for MLPL to work with local Landcare groups in project revegetation.	Recreational Group
	"Any community benefits or incentives offered to directly impact First Peoples will also contribute to healing with traditional land custodians."	First Peoples organisation representative
Economy and Livelihoods (Report sections 7.4 and 9.2)		
Employment	Concern about connection to economic opportunities lacks long term scale employment opportunities.	Community Organisation
	Support the transition of the workers from the Latrobe Valley. We want to see jobs retained in the community. There is mistrust in the industries that have led to economic dislocation in the past.	Community Representative
	Operational staff would be ideally local and trained staff.	Community Organisation
	Some capacity to pick up social disadvantage (including youth) and First Peoples in employment opportunities, ideally targeted.	Community Organisation and Community Representative

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
	Opportunities to utilise the workforce in the fossil fuel sector as that industry begins to decline – but need access to skills.	Community Organisation and Community Representative
	People are unaware of the great jobs that are coming – *"more detail required on what jobs and when."*	Local Government Authority
	"Ongoing Cultural Heritage Advisors could be part of the project workforce long-term to facilitate day-to-day management of First Nations and Cultural Heritage, as well as mentors for the Indigenous workforce to demonstrate ongoing commitment to meaningful and respectful partnerships (including with sub-contractors)."	First Peoples organisation representative
Income	Reduction in the coal power sector workforce and concern about the economic quality of life from that downturn.	Community Organisation
	Lowered income levels as a consequence of the talk of the project. "*This has affected our retirement plans; our farm may no longer be viable as a dairy lease."* *"We have had to reassure our present lessees – they don't know what impact it will have on their production, such as the loss of feed for cows."*	Landholder
Industry and business	*"This project will have a big impact on the farming community and tourism*."	Landholder
	"Make use of local suppliers as the whole region is going through the transition."	Community Representative and Local Government Authority
	Need clear "information about what the opportunities are." Businesses won't expand if there is uncertainty about the project.	Local Government Authority
	"All offshore projects are raising processes for more robust risk assessment on potential impacts to shipping operations. State's need to ensure information is consistent and holistic. Publishing advice to mariners at the same time. Opportunity for greater coordination for regulatory advice updates, possibly." Suggestion of a dedicated boating app that posts updates and restrictions.	Marine stakeholder (peak body)
	Want to see project benefits at least shared between Tasmania and Victoria	Marine stakeholder (peak body)
	"Fishing and marine industry expect there will be impacts to them but need further information to determine what these impacts look like and how they can be mitigated. They highly expect further and ongoing engagement."	Marine stakeholder (peak body)
	"There are good opportunities for the project to create indirect jobs for First Nations community members – for example, in hospitality, management and roadside/mobile businesses to support activities and workforces on the ground as they move around."	First Peoples organisation representative
	Focus on supporting existing Aboriginal businesses in the region by targeting them to take advantage of opportunities that will arise from the project.	First Peoples organisation representative
Workforce skills and availability	Demand for high-paid construction jobs (new energy sector) may take away from other occupations and industries. Which then means these trades cannot service the locals and local area.	Community Organisation
	Workforce scheduling is an issue with the workforce required, particularly with other projects. It is important to coordinate the workforce with projects. Spread workforce scheduling; please do not think of this project in isolation.	Community Organisation
	It is already difficult to fill advertised roles. There are a lot of vacancies in agriculture and engineering and health (hospital) and education.	Local Government Authority

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
	Other renewable energy projects are aware of community concerns about cumulative effects including visibility impacts, land use planning and managing construction workforce impacts. Want to work with MLPL to achieve synergies and reduce community impacts.	Marine stakeholders (e.g oil, gas or energy)
Socio-economic disadvantage	Education post-high school is limited as there is little to no public transport and cost of fuel and energy and access to education and economic wealth.	Community Organisation
Housing affordability and availability	*"One concern for our lower socio-economic – Impact on housing costs and availability – I lived through the construction of the desalination plant – the price on housing went nuts.* "	Healthcare Service Provider and Community Organisation
	The impact on housing will be profound based on the figures provided. Cannot get rental properties. Stress will be experienced for those seeking long term rentals.	Community Organisation, Local Government Authority, Community Representative and Landowner
	Workers' villages have been discussed locally, and the community is concerned that this will create social problems if it happens. No one thinks that is an advantage.	Community Organisation
	Rent – they need to organise housing. Could possibly develop a worker's accommodation village that could be repurposed after the project workers have left.	Healthcare Service Provider
	The majority of accommodation stock in the shire is short-term accommodation (under three months)– there is a lot of availability in the off-season.	Landholder
	When planning housing development, we need to ensure that all levels of government support the council, including where housing is placed and the resourcing of housing approvals. "*Do not create a Marinusville*." Keep growth contained to where services are located.	Local Government Authority
	"There is an opportunity for the project to leave a positive, lasting legacy of long-term accommodation to remain after the project is complete."	First Peoples organisation representative
Agriculture	Concerns expressed by agricultural landholders included: Locating the cable around the property, not through it. • Soil compaction after work and rain. • Access to farm infrastructure such as electricity, irrigation, fencing and outbuildings. • Legal liability and insurance matters. • Construction methods to ensure the infrastructure is clearly marked. • Could create or exacerbate erosion post-construction. • No assurances of end-of-life removal of the cable. • Decreased land values. • Lack of control over who accesses the farm to do maintenance activities. • Introduction of pests and weeds in both construction and operation phases by contractors. • Impact on the water table. • Impact on farm conservation values (flora and fauna) • Impact on farm forestry and trees planted	Landholders

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
	Agricultural-based economy – mainly dairy farming- is one of the key agricultural locations in the state.	Local Government Authority
	Concerns expressed about the impact of the EMFs on farm management: • Electronic collars, radio reception and electronic tags on the cattle, telecommunications on the farm, GPS on tractors. • Will we be fully informed?	Landholder
	Compensation payable to farmers for access. *"How will the compensation be calculated, how will Marinus value it?"*	Landholder, Community Representative and Recreational Group
	Concerns about erosion and the loss of topsoil – large rainfall events will wash it downstream. Is there a bushfire risk?	Landholder
	"How does the depth of the cable affect the use of soil above? Is it able to be used for agriculture?" *"What happens with a cable in the ground 0.5m under the ground? What is the EMF, and what is the temperature of the soil going to be? If you are going to run a cable underground – what are the likely downsides to it?"*	Community representative Landholder
	"If the line must be located on our property, it should only be considered along the boundary to minimise disruption and then potentially fences and tracks could be upgraded." All areas susceptible to erosion must be avoided. All areas adjacent to waterways and water storage must be avoided. Supervision of the construction must be to the highest standard and should be appropriately documented and reported to landowners. Frequent crossing points for piped water conveyance and electric fence connection must be provided. Appropriate shielding of the cables must be provided and documented. Access across the construction footprint must be provided and regular intervals. Clear timing of property entry must be identified and documented. Clear statements of liability in relation to the project must be documented. Appropriate stabilisation and backfill are to be undertaken, supervised during construction and documented. Pest and weed control must be of the highest standard to meet industry QA protocols.	Landholder
Tourism	Tourism drawcards include natural attractions of coastline and state parks, including Waratah Bay and Wilsons Promontory. No visual amenity impact in the operations phase but during construction, there will be disruption to coastal areas.	Local Government Authority and Community Organisation
	The project will have a significant impact on tourism. If construction workers use short-term accommodation in summer, there will be an impact on the tourism sector.	Local Government Authority, Recreational Group and Landowner

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
Infrastructure and Services (Report sections 7.5 and 9.4)		
Governance	Project communications and engagement: • Being clear and consistent in communications throughout the project lifetime to decommission • Create a strong presence in the community • Develop a community benefit scheme • Stakeholder liaison group to include health sector representatives	Community Organisation, Recreational Group, HealthCare Service Provider and Community Representative
	Project communications and engagement: • importance of using established and trusted communication channels to maintain engagement with First Peoples representatives allowing adequate time for consideration by Elders and other significant community members.	First Peoples or organisation representatives
	In the operations phase: *"How the project will be maintained."* *"If there is a fault in the line, how will they be able to identify and respond?"*	Community Representative
Health infrastructure and services	Concerns about how the workforce will access and affect health service provision within the region. *"GPs have already closed their books and are not taking more patients. Where will the primary health care for workers come from?"*	Community Organisation, Healthcare Service Provider and Local Government Authority
	Already experiencing issues in attracting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and podiatrists.	Healthcare Service provider
Emergency Services	Concerned about road closures and access for the CFA fire brigade to perform its duties. Loves Lane provides a connection to Mardan, fire concerns and access to get to fires quickly.	Recreational Group
	ML financial support for the Dumbalk fire brigade to help them work towards a new fire station and emergency service support to the project.	Recreational Group
Transport	Impacts on roads – heavy vehicles (road condition), road safety and extra traffic. Disruptive for people trying to get to work. *"ML has bought a whole farm opposite us and is going to use that as a staging area for equipment. Concerned about being very close to a staging area, trucks are coming and going."*	Community Organisation,]Healthcare Service Provider, Community Representative and Local Government Authority
	Dirt roads are a concern for traffic.	Recreational Group
	Consult key with local fire services (Dumbalk and other areas affected by the project) when planning road works, closures, etc., to know in advance.	Recreational Group
	Construct Waratah Way to alleviate traffic congestion and safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Waratah Bay and Sandy Point.	Community Organisation

Aspect	Feedback	Stakeholder*
Other energy infrastructure	*"Is there any scope to deliver electricity to some of the communities (to provide electricity security) – along the route?"* Include optic fibre cable in the underground area.	Community Organisation Local Government Authority
People's productive capacity (Report sections 7.6 and 9.4)		
Health	Landholders' mental health is affected by "*constant worry and an impact on a property that is our home, which we have little to no control over at this time."*	Landholder
	What is Marinus doing to contribute to the ongoing health and wellbeing of the community?	Community Representative
	How much SF6 gas leakage is expected? That is an environmental and human health concern.	Community Representative
	Will there be monitoring of the radiation from EMFs? Is there heat shielding on the cable that runs with the power cables?	Community Representative
Education and Training	Training requirements to pick up the local workforce and ensure that local providers provide training in advance for those target workers.	Community Organisation
	Tap into the SEC and encourage apprenticeships.	Community Representative
	Access to primary schools would be tricky. The smaller ones may be able to cope.	Healthcare Service provider
	Extra demand for childcare, and the demand for additional services that come with the increase in the number of families.	Local Government Authority
	Education skills and training opportunities for the existing, transitioning and retiring workforce. Reforms to workforce training such as on-the-job training and accreditation to fast-track skill development instead of going to university or TAFE for years. MLPL to work with training providers to streamline.	Local Government Authority

7. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section presents an overview of townships within the study area, followed by a comparison of demographic data that characterises the profile of the resident population (measured as a place of enumeration unless otherwise defined).

7.1 PLACE AND POPULATION

The transmission line traverses two LGAs, South Gippsland and Latrobe City. The subsea cable traverses the Bass Strait from Heybridge in Tasmania and is proposed to make its shore crossing at Waratah Bay in Victoria to the land route. A transition station may be required at Waratah Bay if different there are different supplies for the land and sea cables. A fibre optic station will, however, be required at Waratah Bay.

From Waratah Bay, the land cable will extend underground for approximately 90 km to the converter station in the Driffield or Hazelwood area. The underground cable is proposed to run northwest to the Tarwin River valley and then travel to the north towards the Strzelecki Ranges. The route crosses the ranges between Dumbalk and Mirboo North before descending to the Latrobe Valley, where it turns northeast towards Hazelwood. The Victorian converter station ill be at either a site south of Driffield or Hazelwood adjacent to the existing terminal station.

7.1.1 First Peoples

The proposed alignment takes in areas of South Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley. This includes the northern part of South Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley, which is recognised as Gunaikurnai Country. The Gunaikurnai People (Native Title Holders, Traditional Owner Settlement agreement holders and Registered Aboriginal Party) are represented by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

Other First Peoples the project engages with are the Bunurong People and the Council of the Boonwurrung People. For areas where Traditional Ownership has not yet been formally recognised, MLPL engages with local First Peoples and First Peoples State Relations.

For land along the proposed alignment deemed unrecognised, we will engage First Peoples equally. Figure **7-1** shows the proposed project alignment map, identifying First Peoples.

LEGEND

- Landfall
- Converter station

Proposed route

- HVDC subsea cable
- Underground HVDC cable
- Survey area
- Local government area boundary
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC)
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)

MARINUS LINK

0 3 6 km

SCALE **1:300,000**
PAGE SIZE: **A4**
PROJECTION: **GDA2020 MGA Zone 55**

SOURCE
Proposed route from Tetra Tech Coffey.
LGA boundaries from VICMAP. RAPs from DELWP.
Imagery from ESRI Online.

MARINUS LINK PTY LTD

MARINUS LINK
SIA

FIGURE 7-1

Map of Registered Aboriginal Parties in the social study area

TETRA TECH COFFEY

DATE: **20.05.24** PROJECT: **754-MELEN215878ML** FILE: **215878ML_R20_F006.1_GIS**

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7.1.2 Local government areas

7.1.2.1 South Gippsland

The South Gippsland LGA is approximately 3,296 square kilometres (km^2) in area and is situated in south-eastern Victoria, about 100 km south-east of Melbourne. The shire is bounded by Cardinia and Baw Baw Shires in the north, Latrobe City and Wellington Shire in the east, Bass Strait in the south, and Bass Coast Shire in the west.

South Gippsland Shire was formed in December 1994, with its headquarters located in Leongatha. The 2021 estimated residential population of South Gippsland was 30,263 persons (State Government of Victoria 2019), with an estimated population density of 9.3 persons per km^2.

South Gippsland Shire is characterised as a rural, residential, farming and holiday area. The major towns are Leongatha, Korumburra, Mirboo North, and Foster, with smaller townships at Dumbalk, Fish Creek, Loch, Meeniyan, Nyora, Poowong, Port Welshpool, Sandy Point, Tarwin Lower, Toora, Venus Bay and Welshpool, and many other small communities. Much of the rural area is used for timber production and agriculture, with dairy, beef and vegetable farming being the main agricultural pursuits (South Gippsland Shire Council 2022). South Gippsland's Council Plan 2022-2026 identifies fishing, viticulture and tourism as important industries that contribute to the economic diversity of the region. Gippsland Shire is served by the Bass Highway, the South Gippsland Highway and the Strzelecki Highway.

7.1.2.2 Latrobe City

Latrobe City LGA is approximately 1,426 square kilometres (km2) and is located in the centre of Gippsland and Latrobe Valley, approximately 150kms east of Melbourne. Latrobe City LGA is accessed by the Princes Highway and is serviced daily by a high-speed railway from Melbourne, placing the resident population within easy commute distance to the Melbourne CBD.

Latrobe City LGA was formed in 1994, with its headquarters located in Morwell. The 2021 estimated residential population of Latrobe City LGA was 76,436 (State Government of Victoria 2019), with an estimated population density of 54 persons per km^2.

Latrobe City LGA is characterised by significant industrial development, including the utilisation of the nearby brown coal reserves to support coal-fired power stations and forestry resources, which services Australia's largest pulp and paper mill. Other industries, such as food processing, engineering, and education, support local employment and are also important to the regional economy. Victoria's energy generation has, in the past, been concentrated in the Latrobe Valley. With the transition into renewable energy and the imminent closure of the coal-fired power stations, the economy will be moving towards wind and solar energy generation and reskilling its workforce accordingly.

7.1.3 Urban Centres

The preferred route for the project intersects 18 state suburbs (ABS 2023a), which were identified in Table 5-1. This section describes the main urban centres within the local and regional study area.

7.1.3.1 South Gippsland LGA

Sandy Point

Sandy Point is located in the South Gippsland LGA and has a population of 312 persons (ABS 2023a). The median weekly household income in Sandy Point is $1,518, which is higher than that of South Gippsland LGA at $1,266. There were 677 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 19% of which were occupied

(ABS 2023a). Sandy Point was developed as a small holiday coastal hamlet in the 1950s and has remained a popular destination for surfing, fishing and boating (South Gippsland Shire Council 2015). Accordingly, as a coastal hamlet, Sandy Point has three roles (South Gippsland Shire Council 2015:100):

- A holiday destination for people from Melbourne and the surrounding district.
- A settlement for a small permanent year-round population.
- A destination for tourists to Shallow Inlet and the surrounding Coastal Parks.

Waratah Bay

Waratah Bay is also located within the South Gippsland Shire LGA and is 10km west of Sandy Point and has a population of 48 (ABS 2023a). The median household income of $1,406 is higher than that of South Gippsland, $1,266(ABS 2023a). There were 122 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 20% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). According to South Gippsland Shire Council (2015:106), Waratah Bay:

- Is a holiday destination for Melbourne and the surrounding rural areas.
- Supports a small permanent year-round population.
- Is an entry point for tourists to the beach and Cape Liptrap Coastal Park.

The transition station will be developed adjacent to Waratah Road, if required.

Fish Creek

Fish Creek is 34 km from the shire capital of Leongatha and has a population of 858 persons (ABS 2023a). The median household income of $1,281 is slightly higher than that of South Gippsland, $1,266 (ABS 2023a). There were 445 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 74% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). Fish Creek is located approximately 7 km from the project alignment.

The Great Southern Rail Trail (GSRT), established in 1998, is 72km long and travels through the suburb of Fish Creek and into the centre of the town. The GSRT follows the Great Southern railway line, which ceased services in 1981.

Buffalo

Buffalo is 21km from the shire capital of Leongatha and has a population of 284 persons (ABS 2023a). The median household income of $1,649 is higher than that of South Gippsland, $1,266 (ABS 2023a). There were 134 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 73% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). The project alignment runs adjacent to the township of Buffalo.

Meeniyan

Meeniyan is 16 km from the shire capital of Leongatha and has a population of 840 persons (ABS 2023a). The median household income of $1,326 is higher than that of South Gippsland, $1,266 (ABS 2023a). There were 364 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 89% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). Buffalo is located approximately 4 km from the project alignment.

Mirboo North

Mirboo North is 25 km from the shire capital of Leongatha and has a population of 2,263 persons (ABS 2023a). The median household income of $1,223 is slightly lower than that of South Gippsland at $1,266 (ABS 2023a). There were 944 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 93% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). Mirboo North is located approximately 3 km from the project alignment.

7.1.3.2 Latrobe City LGA

Boolarra

Boolarra is approximately 27 km from Morwell and 170 km from the Melbourne CBD and has a population of 1,023 persons (ABS 2023a). The median weekly household income of $1,200 is lower than that of Latrobe City LGA at $1,260 (ABS 2023a). There were 459 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 87.5% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). The main centre of Boolarra is located approximately four kilometres from the project alignment.

Yinnar

Yinnar is approximately 27 km from Morwell, and 170 km to the Melbourne CBD and has a population of 1,021 persons (ABS 2023a). The median weekly household income of $1,629 is higher than that of Latrobe City LGA at $1,260 (ABS 2023a). There were 431 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 94% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). The main centre of Yinnar is located approximately 3.5 kilometres from the project alignment.

Churchill

Churchill is approximately 11 km from Morwell and 161 km from the Melbourne CBD and has a population of 4,924 persons (ABS 2023a). Churchill was initially developed in 1965 to support coal mining in the region. The median weekly household income of $1,109 is lower than that of Latrobe City LGA at $1,260 (ABS 2023a). There were 2,087 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 92.3% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a). Churchill's main centre is approximately 2.5 kilometres from the project alignment and 3 km from the proposed Hazelwood converter station.

Driffield

Driffield does not have a formed centre and is located approximately 12 km from Morwell and 156 km from the Melbourne CBD and has a population of 101 persons (ABS 2023a). The median weekly household income of $1,875 is 49% higher than that of Latrobe City LGA at $1,260 (ABS 2023a). There were 34 private dwellings at the time of the 2021 census, 100% of which were occupied (ABS 2023a).

7.1.4 Land use directly affected by the project

A land use and planning impact assessment (EIS/EES Technical Appendix S: Land use and planning) characterises baseline conditions to assess impacts on affected properties. The study area includes land within Victoria only, excluding the offshore marine environment. The study area comprises 342 land parcels, with 296 of these land parcels being within the defined project easement. The details of land ownership are detailed in Technical Appendix S: Land use and planning.

Approximately 342 land parcels are within the survey area (the survey area as defined by the approximately 220 m wide buffer to the proposed project alignment, and associated laydown and accesses) between the proposed shore crossing point at Waratah Bay and its termination at the potential Hazelwood converter station site. Of these, 296 land parcels are within the proposed project easement. The majority of the study area is freehold land used for agricultural and rural residential activities. It should be noted that land holdings often include multiple land parcels. It is noted that 104 freehold landowners will be affected by the proposed easement. The Crown land is managed by six land managers.

7.1.5 First Peoples

In 2021, Victoria recorded 65,646 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (First Peoples). Table 7-1 shows the indicative percentage of First Peoples across the local and regional study areas. As shown, LGAs in the regional study area had proportions of First Peoples above that of the state level, at 1.2% for South Gippsland LGA and 2.1% for Latrobe City LGA, compared to 1.0% in Victoria overall. The local study area showed similar population proportions of First Peoples (1.7%).

Table 7-1 Proportion of First Peoples – local and regional study area

Area	Indigenous		Non-Indigenous		Not stated	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
South Gippsland	358	1.2%	28,247	92.4%	1,977	6.5%
Latrobe City	1,659	2.1%	70,356	91.0%	5,299	6.9%
Local study area	233	1.7%	12,631	90.7%	1,056	7.6%
Victoria	65,646	1.0%	6,148,188	94.5%	289,665	4.5%

Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.1.6 Population trends and projections

Yearly population change indicates that both LGAs in the regional study area have experienced growth in population in the last two decades. The estimated resident population for the two LGAs in the local study area is presented in Table 7-2. Population changes between the years 2001 to 2021 for both LGAs were below that of the State of Victoria, which grew by 37.5% over this period. South Gippsland shows a more significant change in population in the same period (17.9%) than Latrobe City (10.8%).

Table 7-2 Estimated resident population by LGA and State for 2001 to 2021

Area	2001	2006	2011	2016	2021	Percentage change	
						Average annual	2001-2021
South Gippsland	25,762	26,128	27,512	29,122	30,378	0.8%	17.9%
Latrobe City	69,573	70,536	73,788	74,622	77,086	0.5%	10.8%
Victoria	4,763,615	5,061,266	5,537,817	6,173,172	6,548,040	1.6%	37.5%

Source: ABS (2023b) Estimated resident population, Local Government Areas (ASGS02021)

Table 7-3 details the current population projections for LGAs within the regional study area from 2016 to 2036 and their projected growth over this period. As detailed, both LGAs within the local study area are estimated to experience population increases between 2016 and 2036 of 11.5% in Latrobe City and up to 16.5% in South Gippsland LGA. In the same period, Victoria's population is estimated to have grown by 41.3%.

Table 7-3 Estimated resident population by LGA and State for 2016 to 2036

Area	2016	2021	2026	2031	2036	Average annual growth (%)	2016-2036 growth	Total population change, No.
South Gippsland	29,122	30,263	31,478	32,727	33,926	0.8%	16.5%	4,804
Latrobe City	74,622	76,436	78,576	80,899	83,195	0.6%	11.5%	8,573
Victoria	6,173,172	6,861,924	7,495,194	8,114,286	8,722,766	1.8%	41.3%	2,549,594

Source: Department of Transport and Planning (2023) Victoria in Future 2019

7.1.6.1 Demographics

Age and sex characteristics of a community provide an indication of the existing and future needs of a community. Table 7-4 provides a summary of the age profile in the local and regional study areas. All areas are ageing, with median ages in the regional study area greater than 42 years old compared to 38 years for Victoria. The median age is the highest in South Gippsland at 49 years, and averages at 44 years for the suburbs within the local study area.

Table 7-4 also provides the dependency ratio for the local and regional study areas and compares the same to Victoria. A dependency ratio shows the ratio of the population that is not typically in the labour force (0 – 14 years and 65+ years) compared to those typically within the labour force (15 to 64 years). A high ratio indicates that there are more people in the working age who can support the population of dependent ages and vice versa. The dependency ratio is the highest for South Gippsland LGA, at 77 dependent persons for every 100 working-aged people. South Gippsland also has the lowest proportion of the population in the ages 0 to 14 years and the highest proportion of the older age population (65+ years). Table 7-4 also provides the sex ratio for the local and regional study areas, compared to Victoria. Sex ratio compares the number of males to every 100 females in the population. The sex ratio sits between 96 and 98 males to every 100 females for both the local and regional study areas, which shows an even balance between the male and female populations and is similar to the sex ratio for the State.

Overall, the following trends are exhibited:

- The median age and dependency ratios for the local and regional study areas are higher than the values for Victoria, showing a trend for a more ageing resident population in these parts of Victoria.
- South Gippsland LGA has higher median age and dependency ratio by comparison to other areas within the study area, therefore indicating a slightly more aged population.

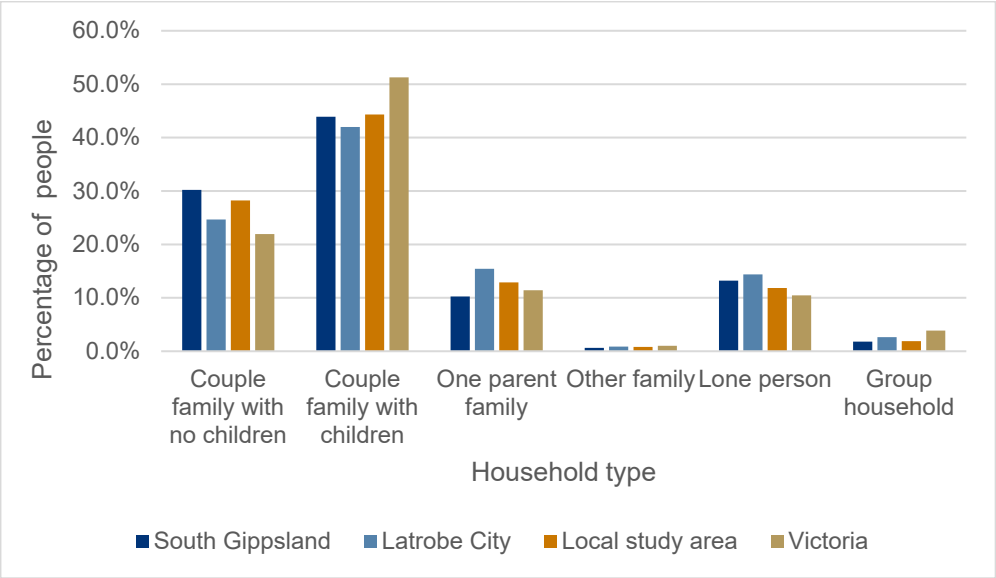
Table 7-4 Age and sex summary profile of local and regional study areas

	0 to 14 years		15 to 64 years		65 and over		Median age	Dependency ratio	Sex ratio
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
South Gippsland	5,134	16.8%	17,325	56.6%	8,128	26.6%	49	77	98
Latrobe City	13,699	17.7%	47,294	61.2%	16,334	21.1%	42	64	96
Local study area	2,532	18.2%	8,286	59.6%	3,096	22.3%	44	68	98
Victoria	1,169,456	18.0%	4,241,201	65.2%	1,092,833	16.8%	38	53	97

Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

7.1.6.2 Household composition

Household composition is used to characterise the type of household (family, single persons, group/shared household) within a dwelling. Figure 7-2 shows the household composition of the local and regional study areas. The dominant household type was couple families with children, followed closely by couple families with no children. The household composition trends are similar across the study areas and consistent with the State.



Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-2 Household composition local and regional study areas

7.2 COMMUNITY IDENTITY

This section provides a consideration of factors that contribute to the way that the community identifies itself in terms of civic participation, resilience, feelings of trust and safety and a sense of belonging in the local and regional study area. These social values are primarily conceptual in that they are terms used to describe a number of factors that contribute to community identity, wellbeing and sense of place. In this baseline, the potential indicators of community identity include social capital, community cohesion, landscape and amenity, character and sense of place, land use and natural resources, ecology and community safety.

Stakeholders interviewed for this SIA described the community that they live in as follows:

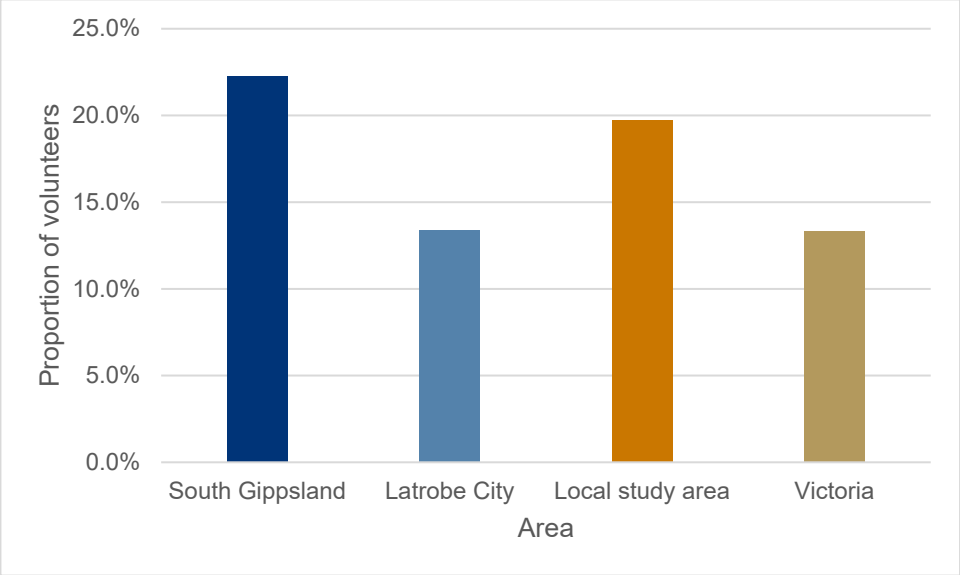
- Small close knit friendly people
- Hard working;
- Thriving little community;
- Values its regional lifestyle
- Strong sense of community and passionate about protecting it;
- Natural environment defines the communities;
- Proud community – huge pride in the pristine nature of the environment;
- Strong belief in shared responsibility.

Social capital is a broad concept often used to refer to how established social networks within a community can be drawn upon to support individual and group needs. Communities that have social capital typically have more well-developed social networks with greater levels of trust (Pope 2003). These networks can be used to

band together to respond crises and challenges, and build on and celebrate community assets (Onyx and Leonard 2010; Bulleen and Onyx 2005; Larsen et al. 2004).

7.2.1 Volunteering

Figure 7-3 shows the proportion of the population that stated they had volunteered in the 2021 Census in the local and regional study area. Volunteering is a common indicator of social capital, as it provides a basis for working together and forms relationships within communities, which are likely to build social networks and establish higher levels of trust and resilience within a community (Pope 2003). As shown, Latrobe City LGA had the lowest proportion of the population who had undertaken voluntary work for an organisation or group in the last 12 months prior to the 2021 Census (13.4%). The state of Victoria observed a similar proportion of volunteers (13.3%). South Gippsland (22.3%) and the local study area (19.8%) were well above the state average of people in the local and regional study areas who had volunteered in the previous 12 months. It should be noted that the 12 months prior to the 2021 census included periods when the population were in COVID-19 lockdowns and as a result, the rates of volunteering could be lower than usual.

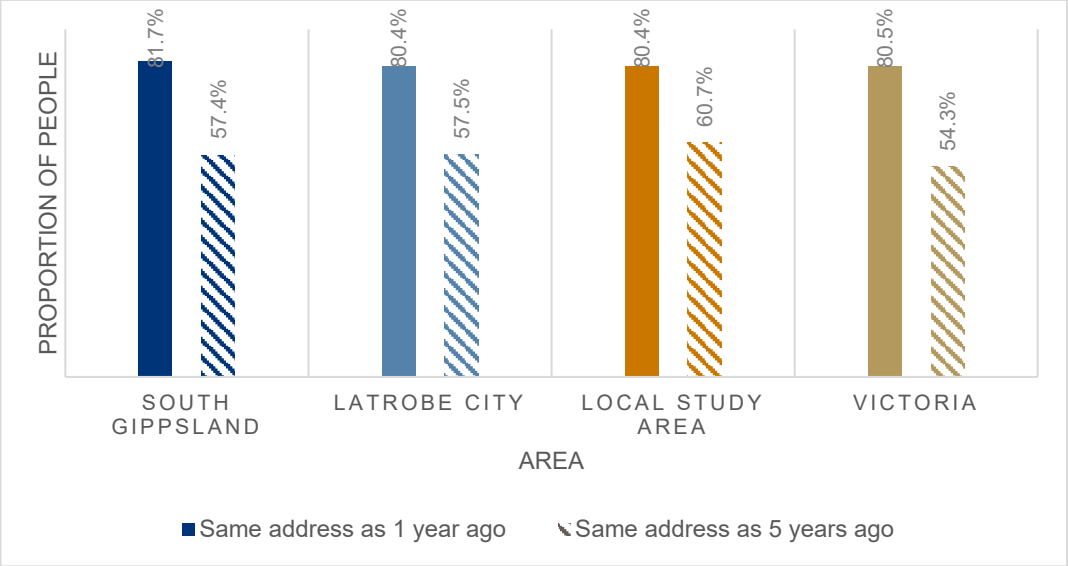


Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-3 Volunteers – local and regional study areas

7.2.2 Length of residence in the community.

Figure 7-4 shows the proportion of the population in the regional study area that stated they lived at the same address one year ago and 5 years ago in the 2021 Census. Length of residence is used as an indicator of social capital as it is linked to more neighbourhood-based friendships and greater participation in local affairs (Larsen et al. 2004). As shown, approximately 80% of the residents in the local and regional study areas reported that they had lived at the same address one year ago. This is similar to that of the State at 80.5%. However, the proportion of people that had lived at the same address five years ago in the local and regional study areas reduces to between 57% and 60% and remains higher than the state (54.3%).

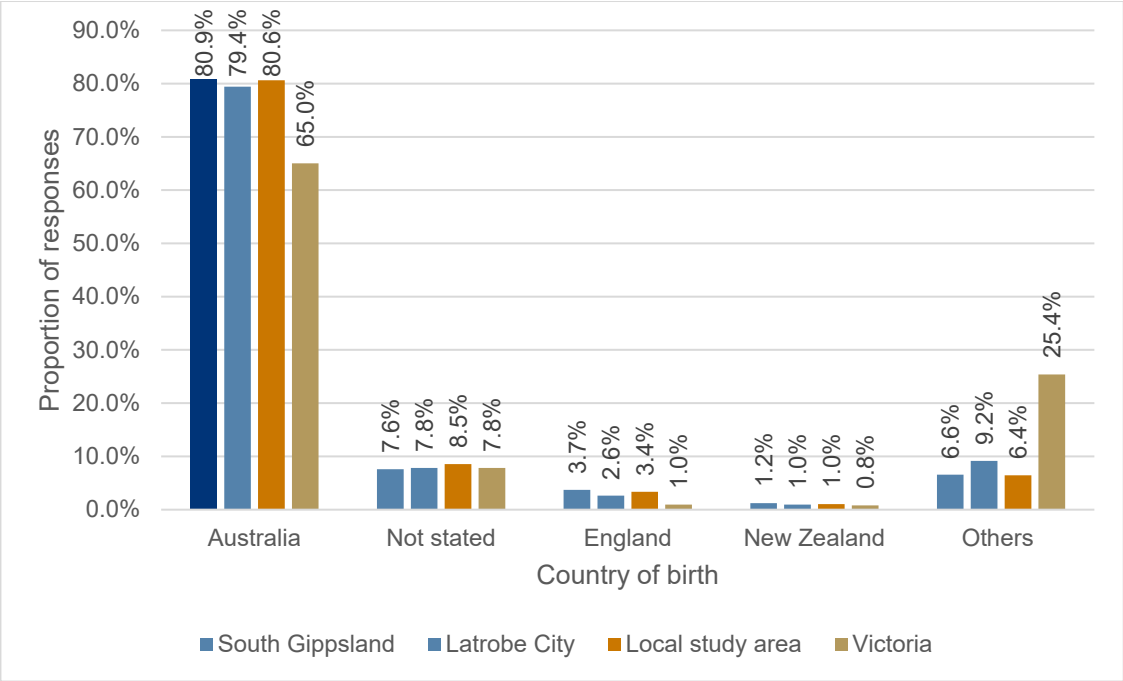


Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-4 Place of usual residence – local and regional study areas

7.2.3 Cultural diversity

Figure 7-5 depicts the country of birth for residents in the local and regional study areas. Australia is the predominant country of birth in the regional and local study areas, with a proportion of 80%. The state shows a similar trend, with 65% of its population born in Australia; however, a much higher proportion was born in other countries (25.4%), by comparison to approximately 10% for the regional and local study areas.



Source: ABS (2023) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-5 Country of birth for local and regional study area

Table 7-5 reveals the ancestry by the respondent's parent's country of birth. The local and regional study areas show that the predominant ancestries are Australian and English, with both around 30%. Victoria has a lower proportion of Australian (20.3%) and English (21.7%) ancestry but has a higher percentage of ancestry

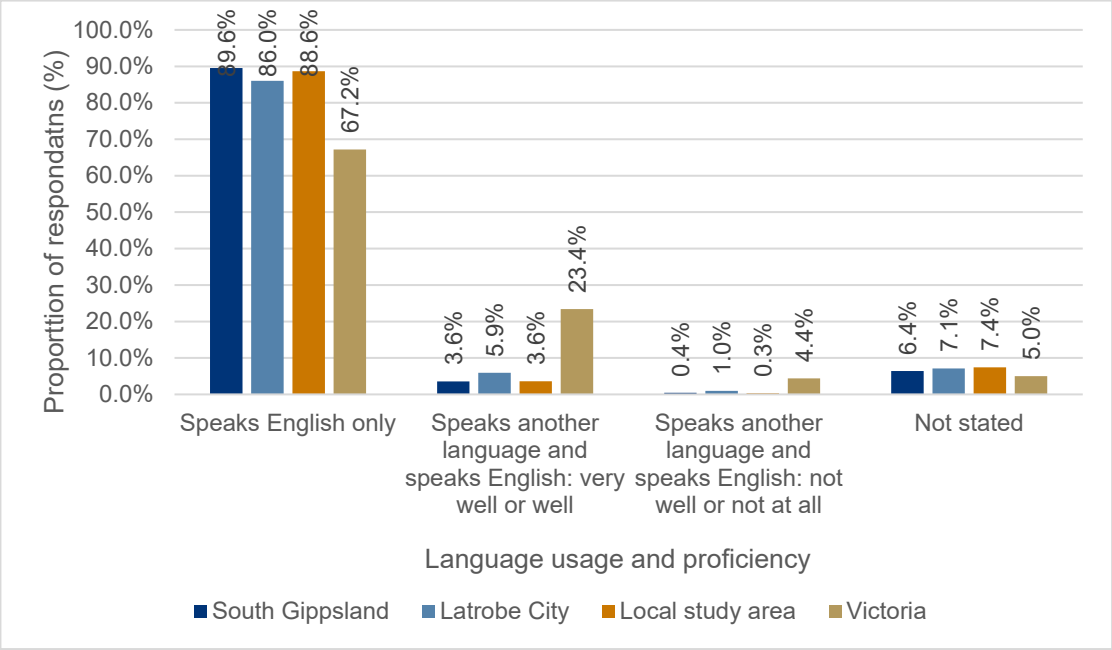
from other countries. This data indicates that the regional and local study areas are less culturally diverse than the rest of the state.

Table 7-5 Ancestry by country of birth parents for local and regional study area (2021)

Ancestry	South Gippsland	Latrobe City	Local Study Area	Victoria
Australian	29.8%	28.6%	30.4%	20.3%
English	31.1%	28.4%	29.4%	21.7%
Irish	8.8%	7.0%	8.0%	7.0%
Scottish	8.8%	7.8%	8.5%	6.1%
Filipino	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%
German	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	2.4%
Dutch	2.7%	2.7%	3.1%	0.0%
Indian	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%
Italian	2.8%	3.2%	3.0%	4.4%
Australian Aboriginal	0.7%	1.4%	1.1%	0.0%
Ancestry not stated	4.9%	6.0%	5.8%	4.3%
Chinese	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%
Others	7.4%	11.0%	7.7%	25.7%

Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

English was the predominant language spoken at home for residents in the local study area, with 88.6% identifying English as their only language, and 89.6% for South Gippsland and 86% for Latrobe City (see Figure 7-6 and Table 7-5).

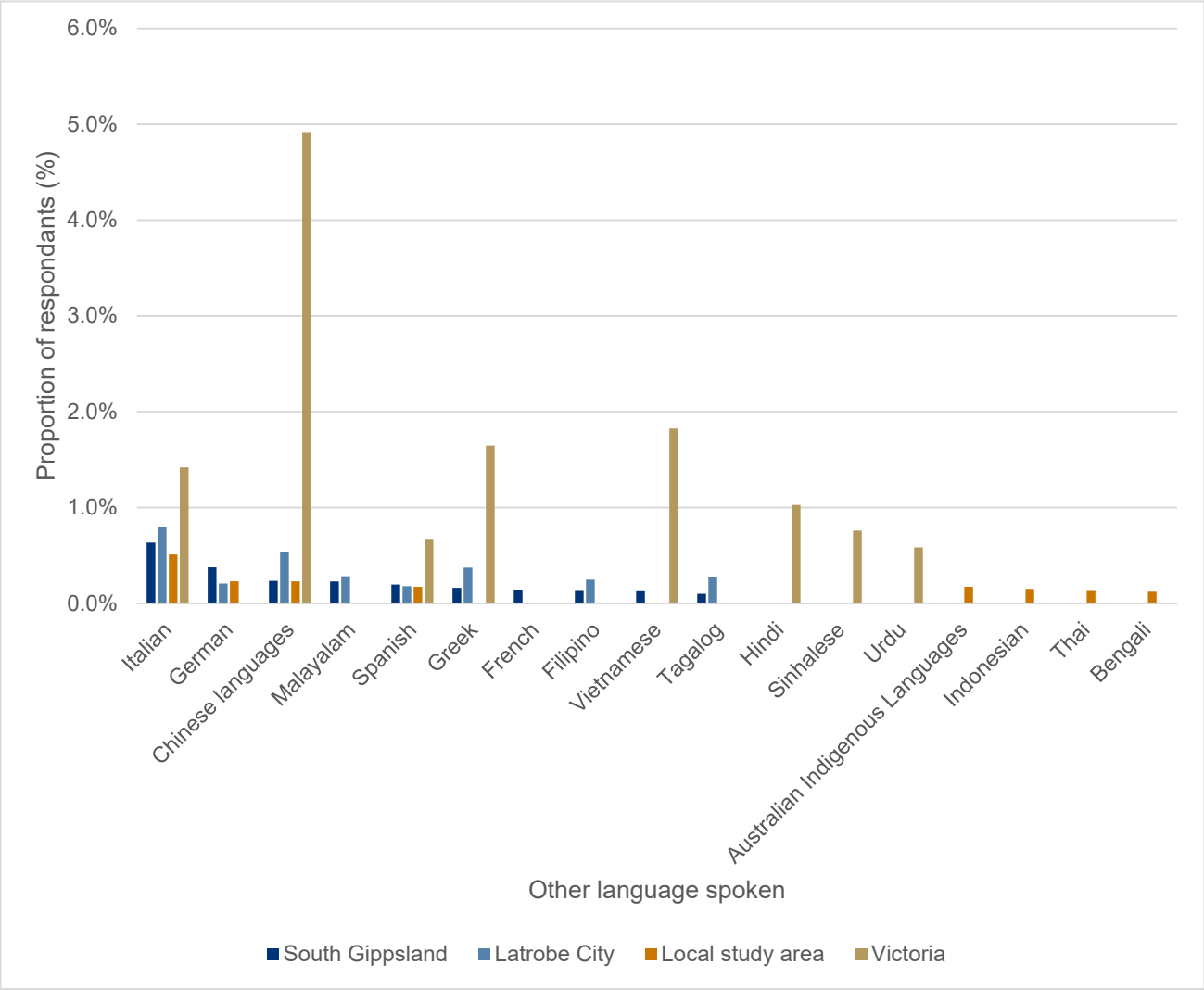


Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-6 English language use in local and regional study areas

In 2021, a small proportion of households reported use of languages other than English, with no language group representing greater than 1.0%. Italian, German and Chinese were some of the more prevalent languages after English (see Figure 7-7 below). The state, however, showed higher proportions of other language speakers.

Overall, a review of demographic indicators of cultural diversity suggests a high level of cultural homogeneity. Most people in the local and regional study areas were born in Australia, and over 80% of people identify as either British or Australian. Similarly, most people speak English at home.



Source: ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing 2021

Figure 7-7 Other languages spoken in the local and regional study areas

7.2.4 Landscape amenity and character

Landscapes are defined by people. The definitions are just as varied, dynamic, and complex as the people who define them. Sense of place describes the relationship between people and the spatial area (including landscapes) that they live in and/or identify with. How a change in the landscape affects individuals and communities depends on the meaning that each individual attaches to the features within the landscape. If the change is deemed by an individual to be inconsistent with either their values or the physical setting, then change is viewed negatively. Similarly, if a change in the landscape is consistent with the values or physical setting, then the change is perceived to be neutral or positive.

Participants in the SIA described the key characteristics of the communities living in and around the project as follows:

- Close-knit
- Small rural communities dependent on agriculture for their living
- Holiday towns (Waratah Bay and Sandy Point)
- Participants described areas in proximity to the project area that hold a special sense of place or significance to the community as:
- Beaches at Waratah Bay and Sandy Point
- Strzelecki Ranges
- Mirboo North Forests
- GSRT
- Grand Ridge Rail Trail (GRRT).

SIA consultation for the project identified several natural and recreation areas (Table 7-6) that are sensitive to changes in the landscape. These included Sandy Point, Waratah Bay, the GSRT, the GRRT and the Mirboo North State Forest. These are described below.

Table 7-6 Natural and recreational areas within 4.0 km of the preferred route

Name	Description and community use	Distance from the project
Sandy Point	Fishing, walking, nature conservation activities.	1.6 km
Waratah Bay	Fishing, walking, nature conservation activities	3.7 km
Mirboo State Forest	Conservation values (citizen science), walking, trail bike riding, horse riding, and bicycling. Alignment travels through and under the forest for approximately 15km	0 km
GSRT	Walking, running, bicycling and horse riding. Intersects (travels under) at Pleasant Valley Road.	0 km
GRRT	Walking, running, bicycling and horse riding.	20 m

7.3 ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOODS

This section describes how people make a living in the local and regional study area and provides an overview of the structure of the economy. This includes:

- Employment and workforce
- Income
- Industry and business
- Housing affordability and availability
- Socio- economic dis/advantage
- Land use and natural resources.

7.3.1 Employment and workforce

This section provides an overview of the employment profile within the local and regional study area.

7.3.1.1 Labour Force Participation

Table 7-7 shows the employment characteristics of the local and regional study areas compared to Victoria at the 2021 Census. Labour force participation of about 55% in the local and regional study areas was lower than that of the state (62.4%). Low participation may partly be due to the comparatively aged population in the regional study area; however, it is noted that low participation and higher unemployment rates can also indicate socio-economic disadvantage in the region.

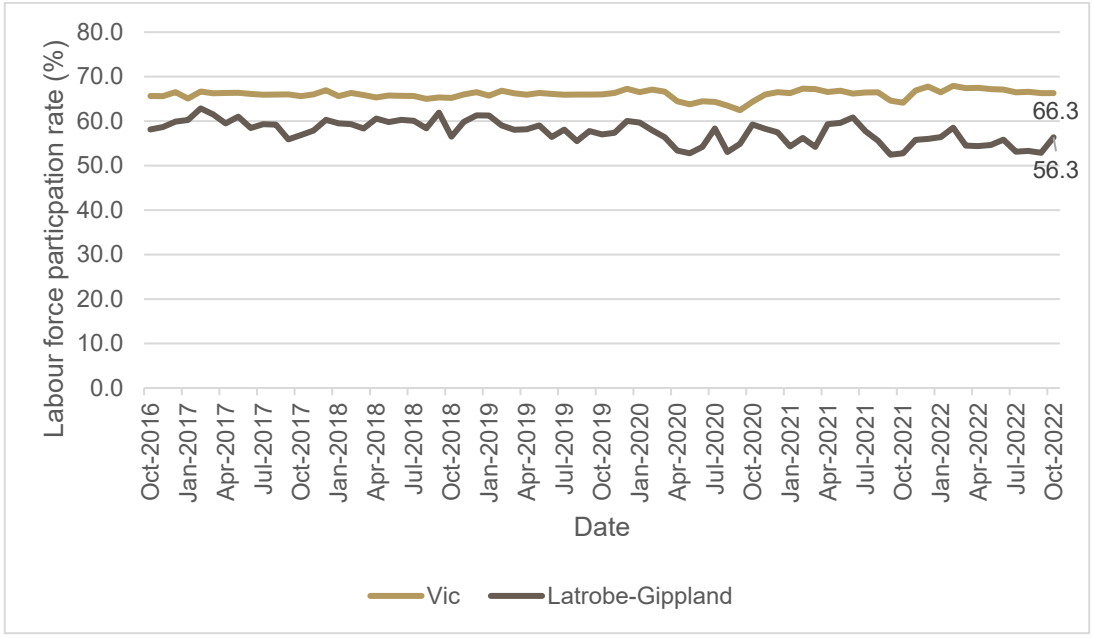
Table 7-7 Employment status – local and regional study areas (2021)

Employment status	South Gippsland	Latrobe City	Local study area	Victoria
Unemployed	448	2,274	315	167,667
Unemployment rate (%)	3.2%	6.6%	5.0%	5.0%
Labour force	14,051	34,406	6,249	3,330,562
Labour force participation (%)	55.2	54.1	54.9	62.4

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

When the labour force participation rate trends for the last five years are examined in the Latrobe – Gippsland region, the region has consistently been below that of the state (see Source: *ABS (2023d), 6291.0.55.001 – RM1 – Labour Force Status by Age, Labour Market Region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 Onwards.*

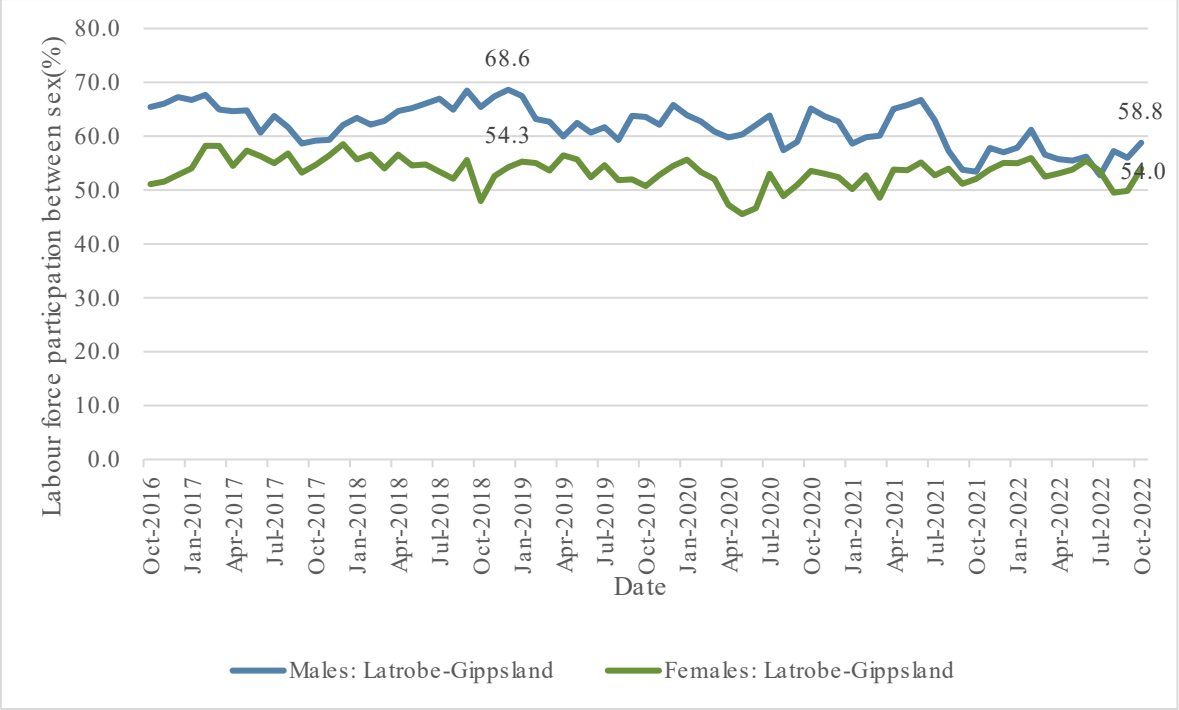
As at October 2022, the Latrobe-Gippsland region was 10% below the state's participation rate.



Source: ABS (2023d), 6291.0.55.001 – RM1 – Labour Force Status by Age, Labour Market Region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 Onwards.

Figure 7-8 Labour force participation rate – regional study area and state

Figure 7-8 below shows that the labour force participation rates for males has been higher than experienced by females. In January 2019, the difference in participation rates between males and females was 14.3%. In October 2022, the difference was only 4% which is consistent with the national wide labour shortage and high rates of employment.



Source: ABS (2023d), 6291.0.55.001 – RM1 – Labour Force Status by Age, Labour Market Region (ASGS) and Sex, October 1998 Onwards.

Figure 7-9 Male and female rate of participation in labour force participation – regional study area

7.3.1.2 Unemployment

Table 7-8 shows the employment of people aged 15 and over who reported being in the labour force in the local and regional study areas. South Gippsland LGA shows a lower unemployment rate (3.2%) than the state (5.0%), whereas the Latrobe City LGA is slightly above at 6.6%. The local study area mirrored the state unemployment rate at 5.0%.

Table 7-8 Employment status (15 years and over)

Study Area	Worked full time	Worked part time	Away from work	Unemployed
South Gippsland	50.7%	37.7%	8.3%	3.2%
Latrobe City	52.3%	33.8%	7.3%	6.6%
Local study area	50.2%	36.4%	8.4%	5.0%
Victoria	56.2%	32.3%	6.5%	5.0%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Table 7-9 below shows the labour force status (employment and unemployment) for First Peoples within the regional study area (combined Latrobe City and South Gippsland LGAs). The data provided in the table highlights the over-representation of unemployment by First Peoples within the regional study area compared to the proportion of the regional population (1.5%).

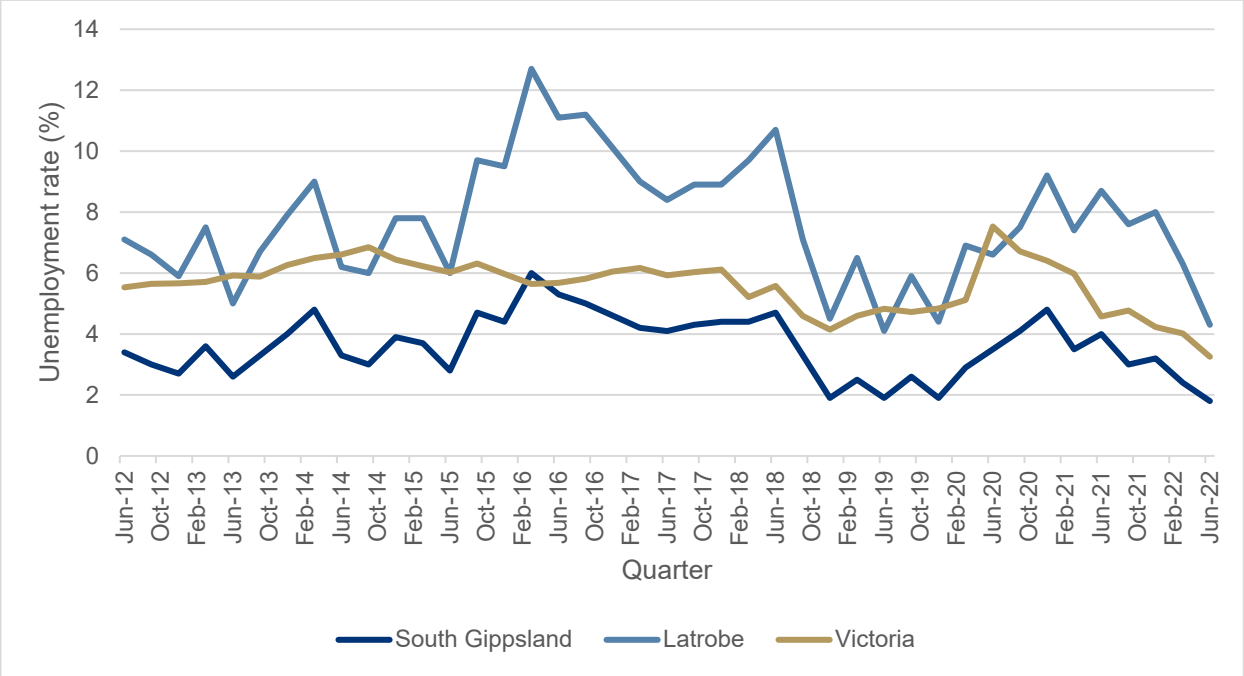
Table 7-9 First Peoples labour force status – regional study area

Labour force status	Non-Indigenous (%)	Aboriginal (%)	Torres Strait Islander	Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	Not stated
Employed, worked full-time	98.3	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.5
Employed, worked part-time	98.3	1.1	0.1	0.0	0.5
Employed, away from work	97.4	1.6	0.2	0.1	0.7
Unemployed, looking for full-time work	93.4	5.0	0.2	0.0	1.4
Unemployed, looking for part-time work	97.2	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.5
Not in the labour force	97.4	1.4	0.1	0.0	1.1
Not stated	19.1	0.5	0.0	0.0	80.4
Not applicable	0	0	0	0	0

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021 Tablebuilder

Figure 7-10 below shows the unemployment rate in the regional study area from June 2012 to June 2022. As shown, unemployment rates in South Gippsland LGA have been below the state, with an exception in February 2016, when the unemployment rate was similar. The unemployment rate for Latrobe City LGA illustrates significant variation over the ten-year period, with the only trend being that the unemployment rate is higher than that experienced in South Gippsland LGA and that it is generally above the state unemployment rate.

The COVID-19 pandemic began to have a negative impact on the Australian labour market in March 2020, when the initial shutdown of non-essential services and trading restrictions took effect (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021). The effect of COVID-19 can be seen in the regional study area, where the unemployment rate increased in all areas, from March 2020. In the middle of 2021, the unemployment rate began to drop again. The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has noted that the unemployment rate may not fully reflect the labour market adjustment to COVID-19, noting that record numbers of people left the labour force, leading to a smaller increase in the unemployment rate than would have otherwise occurred (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021). As such, there is potential that there has been a greater change in the labour market in the regional study area than shown or currently understood.



Source: Department of Education, Skills and Employment. 2022. Small Area Labour Markets. October Quarter 2022.

Figure 7-10 Unemployment rate from March 2012 to March 2022 regional study areas

7.3.2 Income

The median household income in the regional study area is 28% lower than the median household income in Victoria (see Table 7-10).

Table 7-10 Median household income – local and regional study areas

Area	South Gippsland	Latrobe City	Victoria
Median household income ($/weekly)	$1,266	$1,260	$1,759
Median household income ($/annual)	$65,832.00	$65,520.00	$91,468.00

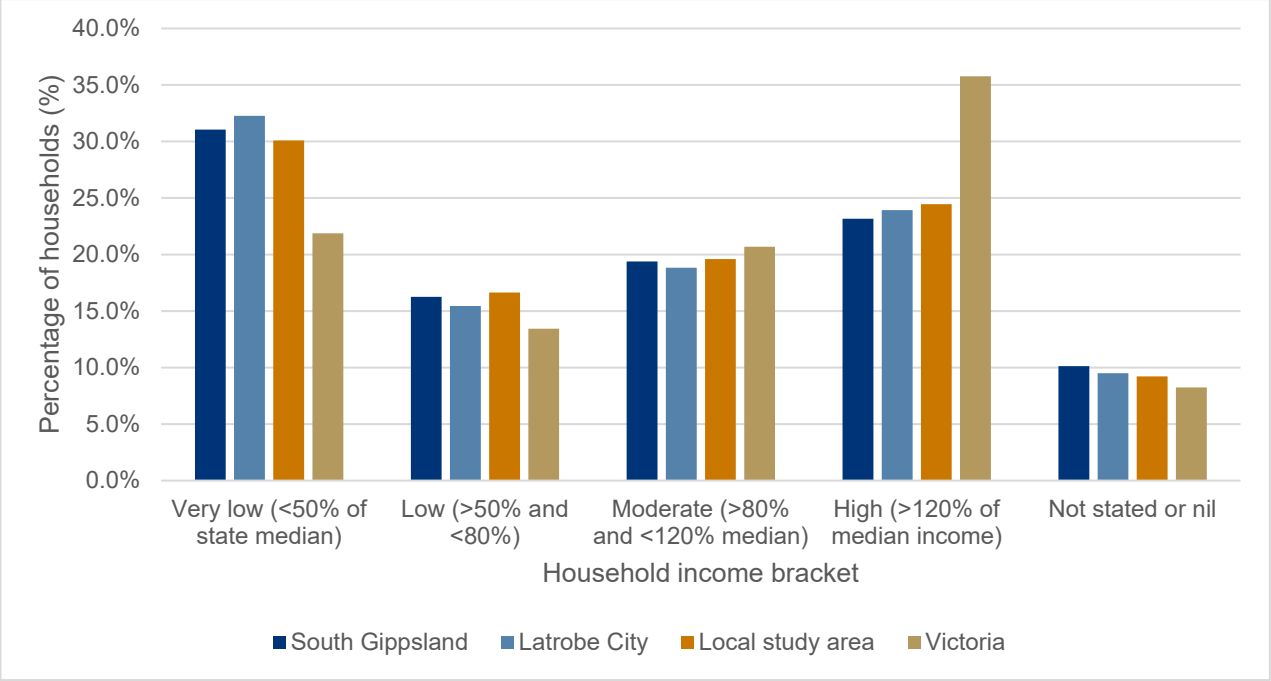
Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 7-11 shows the median weekly household income as at the 2021 Census, with incomes aggregated as follows:

- Very low-income households are defined as those with incomes <50% of the state median income.
- Low-income households are defined as those with incomes between >50% and <80% of the state median income.
- Moderate-income households are defined as those with incomes between >80% and <120% of the state median income.
- High-income households are defined as those with incomes >120% of the state median.

As shown, higher proportions of households in the local and regional study areas were classified in the very low- and low-income brackets compared to that of the state (21.9%), with the Latrobe City LGA being the

highest in this classification at 32.3%. Conversely, lower proportions of households in the local and regional study areas were classified in the high-income bracket compared to the state (35.8%), ranging from 23.2% households in South Gippsland LGA, 23.9% in Latrobe City LGA and 24.5% of households in the local study area.



Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 7-11 Household income distribution, 2021

7.3.3 Industry and businesses

Table 7-11 details employment by industry in the local and regional study area at the time of the 2021 Census (counting persons 15 years and over), with the industries that represent the top three industries of employment for local and regional study areas.

The industry of employment profile is shown in Table 7-11. As shown, health care and social assistance, along with construction, are the most common industries of employment in the regional study area. The key trends are discussed below:

- Health care and social assistance is the largest employer within the local and regional study areas and at the state level, aside from South Gippsland LGA, where it is the second largest employer and is surpassed by the share of agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry in the workforce.
- In South Gippsland LGA and the local study area, the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry hold a large share in the employment, employing 15.0% and 11.0% of the workforce. However, in contrast, the proportion is lower in Latrobe City LGA and Victoria, where only 2.8% and 2.1% of the workforce, respectively, are employed in the agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry.
- The next largest industry of employment at around 10% across all study areas is construction.
- Both in the Latrobe City LGA and Victoria, there is a shift away from agriculture, forestry and fishing towards services-based industries.

Table 7-11 Employment by industry local and regional study areas

Industry	South Gippsland	Latrobe City	Local study area	Victoria
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	15.0%	2.8%	11.0%	2.1%
Mining	0.5%	1.3%	0.8%	0.3%
Manufacturing	6.8%	6.9%	5.9%	7.0%
Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services	1.4%	5.7%	4.0%	1.1%
Construction	10.4%	9.9%	10.2%	9.4%
Wholesale Trade	2.9%	1.7%	2.0%	2.8%
Retail Trade	8.4%	10.2%	8.4%	9.4%
Accommodation and Food Services	5.4%	6.5%	5.4%	6.2%
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	3.9%	3.3%	3.3%	4.7%
Information Media and Telecommunications	0.7%	1.3%	1.0%	1.6%
Financial and Insurance Services	1.5%	1.5%	1.1%	4.1%
Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services	0.9%	1.1%	0.9%	1.5%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	4.3%	3.3%	3.7%	8.4%
Administrative and Support Services	2.7%	2.8%	3.1%	3.1%
Public Administration and Safety	3.9%	8.1%	6.4%	5.6%
Education and Training	8.0%	7.8%	8.4%	8.8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	13.5%	17.0%	14.8%	14.1%
Arts and Recreation Services	1.7%	1.0%	1.5%	1.7%
Other Services	4.0%	3.9%	3.7%	3.5%
Inadequately described/Not stated	4.2%	4.1%	4.5%	4.6%

Source: ABS (2023), Census of Population and Housing (counting persons 15 years and over), 2021

7.3.4 Housing affordability

This section provides an overview of housing in the local and regional study area, including dwelling structure and occupancy, tenure type and affordability.

7.3.4.1 Dwelling structure and occupancy

Housing in the local and regional study areas are predominantly detached or separate houses, with 95.5% of dwellings in the South Gippsland LGA and 88.0% of dwellings in the Latrobe City LGA being detached, as shown in Table 7-12. Within the local study area, the proportion of detached houses is higher, at 97.7% and by comparison, this proportion is 73.4% for the state of Victoria.

The proportion of private occupied dwellings varied within the regional study area, with South Gippsland LGA recording lower occupancy rates at 74.3% than Latrobe City LGA, at 91.2%, and 81.0% within the local study area (see Table 7-12). In comparison, the occupancy of private dwellings within the whole of Victoria is 88.9%. Lower occupancy levels can be indicative of seasonal use of dwellings or out-migration for job purposes within South Gippsland LGA.

Table 7-12 Dwelling structures – local and regional study areas, 2021

Area	Dwelling structure					Total private dwellings	Occupancy
	Detached	Semi-detached	Attached	Other	Not stated		
South Gippsland	95.5%	2.8%	0.9%	0.6%	0.1%	16,149	74.3%
Latrobe City	88.0%	5.9%	5.6%	0.4%	0.1%	33,571	91.2%
Local study area	97.7%	1.3%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6,517	81.0%
Victoria	73.4%	13.9%	12.1%	0.4%	0.1%	2,688,261	88.9%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

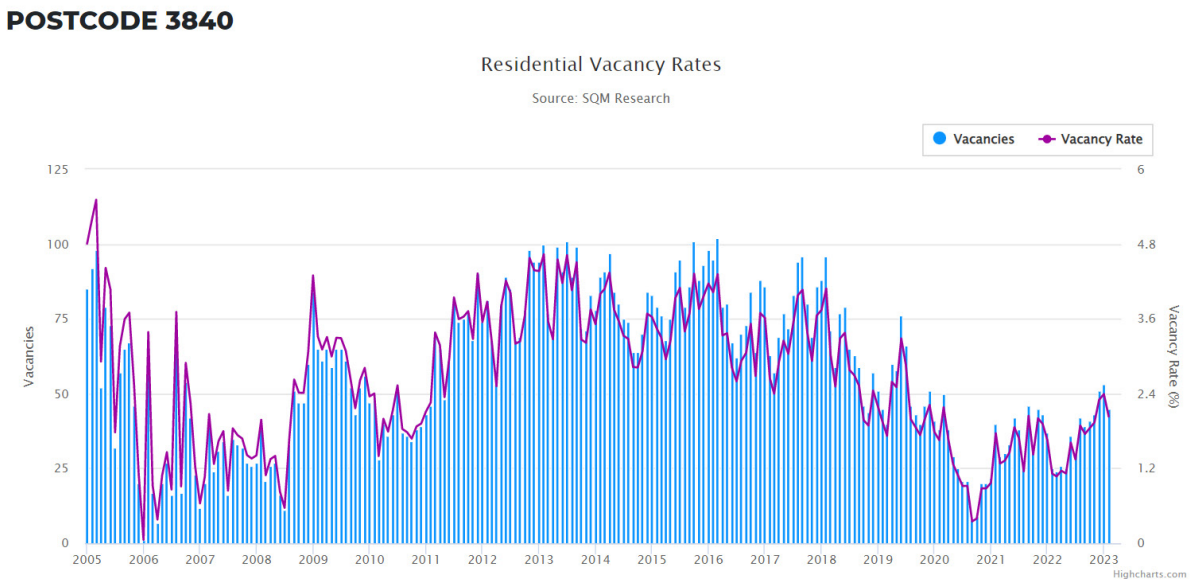
Note: Based on the census count of all persons enumerated in the dwelling on Census night, including visitors from within Australia. Excludes usual residents who were temporarily absent on Census night. Excludes 'Visitors only' and 'Other non-classifiable' households.

7.3.4.2 Rental availability and affordability

Rental vacancy rates are used to indicate the availability of rental properties. In general, vacancy rates are indicative of demand and the potential difficulty to secure rental housing as follows:

- Rates above 3.5% are indicative of weak demand and most people would be able to access housing.
- Rates between 2.5% and 3.5% are indicative of a normal market, and most households without socioeconomic vulnerabilities would be able to access housing.
- Rates below 2.5% are indicative of high demand and many households may compete for housing and some households may have difficulty in accessing the housing they would prefer.
- Rates below 1.0% are indicative of a rental shortage, which often results in rent increases and pushes low-income households out of the private rental market (REIQ 2020; UTAS 2019).

Rental vacancy rate data are published by postcode by SQM Research. In the regional study area, data published for the Morwell postcode 3840 is shown in Figure 7-12 below. The most recent vacancy rate (February 2023) was 2.0%. Rental vacancy rates for other postcodes in the region, such as Fish Creek (3959) and Sandy Point (3959), had both been 0.0% for the 12 months ending February 2023, Meeniyan (3956) was 6.2% at February 2023, Mirboo North (3871) was 0.0%, Boolarra (3870) was 2.0%, Yinnar (3869) was 0.0% and Churchill (3842) was 1.3%.



Source: SQM Research, February 2023

Figure 7-12 Rental vacancy rates – Morwell (South Gippsland)

SGS Planning, National Shelter, Community Sector Banking, and Brotherhood of St Laurence (2019) have developed a Rental Affordability Index, that calculates rental affordability on an annual basis. As affordability is based on household income, the index calculates affordability based on a number of different types of renting cohorts. Rental affordability as at quarter 2 in 2022 across various state suburbs in the local study area where data was available is shown in Table 7-13. Rental housing is affordable for the average rental household with a household income of $100,000 per annum. Rental affordability for single part time worker parents on benefits in the region (the only locality where data was available) was rated as moderately unaffordable.

Table 7-13 Rental affordability – various postcodes within the local study area (Quarter 2, 2022)

Area (postcode)	Average rental household	Pensioner couple	Single part time parent worker on benefits	Student sharehouse
Morwell (3840)	Affordable	Acceptable	Moderately unaffordable	Acceptable
Leongatha (3953)	Affordable	Data not available	Data not available	Acceptable
Churchill (3842)	Affordable	Data not available	Data not available	Acceptable

Source: SGS Planning et. Al. (2023) Rental Affordability Index

The median household income in the regional study area was well below $100,000 at $65,832 for South Gippsland LGA and $65,520 for Latrobe City LGA. The Rental Affordability Index does not consider the relationship between affordability and demand i.e., how many rental houses are available at an affordable price. The rental vacancy rates within the LGAs indicated that most, with the exception of Meeniyan, were below 2.5%, suggesting that many households may compete for housing and some households may have difficulty accessing the housing they would prefer. Results from the SIA consultation expressed concerns for both the availability and affordability of housing in the construction phase.

7.3.5 Property values

The potential for the project to affect the values of properties was raised during the SIA consultation. However, it is difficult to quantify what effect the underground transmission line will have on property values. Wadley et al. (2019) recent research examined the social attitudes and financial estimates held by homeowners, valuers, and real estate agents towards the placement of linear infrastructure (overhead transmission lines). Their results found statistically significant differences in the risk and valuation perceptions of homeowners, valuers and real estate agents relating to the placement of linear infrastructure.

Defining the parameters of the impacts on surrounding property values is complex, subjective, and highly variable. The difference between what the market will pay, the methods that valuers and real estate agents apply to derive property values in proximity to transmission lines and the land/homeowners' perceptions vary too greatly to confidently quantify what the impact of this proposal may have upon property values. For this reason, an assessment of the impact of the underground transmission line on directly affected and surrounding property values cannot be reliably quantified and has, therefore, not been addressed as part of the social impact assessment process.

7.3.6 Socio economic disadvantage

ABS produces four socio-economic indices for areas (SEIFA), the latest being based on the 2016 Census. These indices identify relative advantage and disadvantage at a geographic level. Each has been examined for the local and regional study areas to ascertain levels of economic prosperity.

First is the index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage (IRSAD), which looks at multiple indicators that measure people's ability to access materials or social resources and participate in society. These measures include income, employment, education, car ownership, and housing. The IRSAD divides the state population into ten equal deciles. The lowest-scoring 10% of the decile groups is the most disadvantaged group and is given a decile number of 1, and the highest-scoring 10% is the most advantaged, which is given a decile of 10. Data is shown at the ABS Statistical Area 1 (SA1) level and is discussed for the regional and local study areas in Table 7-14.

Table 7-14 Index of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage – local and regional study areas (2016)

Area	Discussion
South Gippsland LGA	At the LGA level, the decile score for South Gippsland is 5, ranking as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. Examination at the SA1 level reveals variations. Working from south to north along the project alignment, suburbs and localities of Sandy Point, Waratah Bay, Fish Creek, Buffalo and Meeniyan are at a position of advantage (decile 7-10) or neither advantage nor disadvantage (decile 4-6). This can point towards a competition for resources and opportunities in these parts of the LGA. Within South Gippsland, the relative disadvantage is seen to be the highest (at quintile 1) in Foster, which is approximately 17 km away from the alignment.
Latrobe City LGA	At the LGA level, the decile score for Latrobe City is 1, placing the LGA at a disadvantaged position. Examination at the SA1 level reveals variations within LGA, with high disadvantage levels (quintile 1) seen in the relatively densely populated parts of the LGA, in Churchill, Morwell and Traralgon. These population centres bring the overall ranking of the LGA to a position of disadvantage. This can be indicative of higher competition for resources and opportunities in these parts of the LGA. Areas extending away from the population centres have recorded lower levels of disadvantage.

Source: Census of Population and Housing: Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016. ABS Census SEIFA data not available until mid-2023.

The index of economic resources (IER) summarises variables related to the financial aspects of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. The scoring system for IER is the same as IRSAD. Data for IER is shown at the ABS Statistical Area 1 (SA1) level and is discussed for the regional and local study areas in Table 7-15.

Table 7-15 Index of economic resources – local and regional study areas (2016)

Area	Discussion
South Gippsland LGA	At the LGA level, the decile score for South Gippsland is 7, ranking at an advantaged position. Examination at the SA1 level reveals variations with population centres of Fish Creek and Meeniyan (decile 5 3) exhibiting lower advantage levels, whereas the remaining parts of the LGA, show a consistent trend towards advantage (decile above 7). The most disadvantaged area is Foster (at quintile 1), which is outside the project area.
Latrobe City LGA	At the LGA level, the decile score for Latrobe City is 1, placing the LGA at the most disadvantaged rank. Examination at the SA1 level reveals high disadvantage levels (quintile 1) seen in the population centres of Churchill, Morwell and Traralgon, with the rest of the LGA exhibiting a general trend of economic advantage (decile 7+). This can be indicative of higher competition for resources and opportunities in these parts of the LGA.

Source: Census of Population and Housing: Socio-economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2016. ABS Census SEIFA data not available until mid-2023.

Index of education and occupation (IEO) summarises variables related to the educational and occupational aspects of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage and has the same scoring system as IRSAD and IER. The trends for IEO remain the same as that for IER, with South Gippsland LGA showing an overall level of advantage at a decile of 5 and Latrobe City LGA showing high disadvantage at a quintile score of 1. Within Latrobe City LGA, the population centres of Churchill, Morwell and Traralgon have high levels of disadvantage, which are determining the trend for the overall LGA.

7.3.7 Land use and natural resources

7.3.7.1 Agriculture

The ABS (2022b) provide the combined total gross value of agricultural production for the financial year ending June 30, 2021, for the Latrobe City and South Gippsland LGAs as $714,715,042, with more than 91% produced in the South Gippsland Shire.

For both LGAs, milk production had the greatest value of all the livestock products, and the production of cattle and calves had the greatest value within the livestock slaughtered category. Similarly, hay production that supports both the dairy and cattle industry as well as for sale was also a high-value agricultural crop. Potato crops accounted for 14% of the gross value of vegetable production in Latrobe City, and only 3% in South Gippsland LGA. Herb production in South Gippsland LGA accounted for 12% of the gross value of vegetable production and 9% in Latrobe City LGA.

This section describes existing land uses within the study area and the broader region from EIS/EES Technical Appendix S: Land use and planning.

Waratah Bay to Baromi

The survey area from the high-water line at Waratah Bay to Baromi is located within South Gippsland Shire and spans approximately 55 kilometres of predominantly agricultural land. The majority of land in this segment of the study area is used for dry land grazing activities with some medium-scale cropping. There are several dams of various capacities associated with agricultural use within the survey area.

The proposed project alignment follows significant landscape features such as waterways where possible, as well as key roads and property boundaries. The alignment crosses several waterways, including Little Morwell River as well as arterial roads within this segment of the study area. Vegetation exists within the survey area

in variously sized patches, and on both freehold and Crown land. Within this segment of the study area, the alignment passes adjacent to local population centres at Buffalo, Meeniyan, Stony Creek, Dumbalk and Mirboo North / Baromi.

Baromi to Driffield

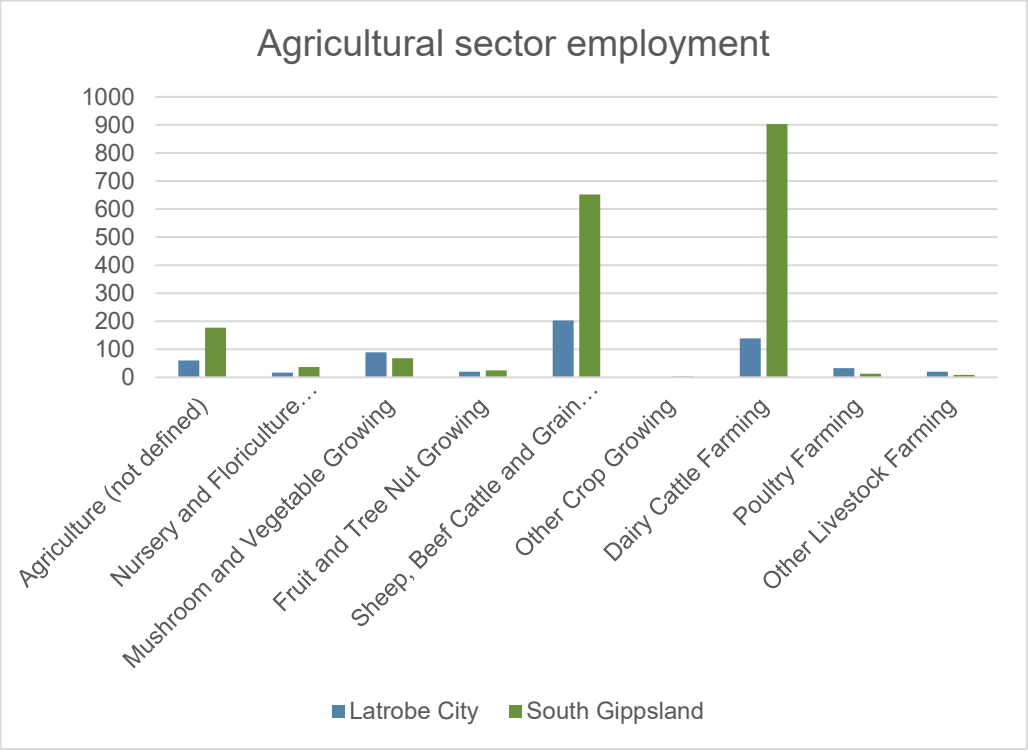
The study area covering the proposed project alignment from Baromi to Driffield includes land within both the South Gippsland and Latrobe municipalities. In the south-west of this segment, the proposed project alignment can be seen to generally follow that of the local government area (LGA) boundary, crossing it at several points. The study area from Baromi to Driffield, in the north-east, is made distinct by the predominant use of the area for conservation and timber plantations. North of Baromi, the proposed project alignment passes through the southern block of the Strzelecki State Forest, generally following Old Darlimurla Road.

Driffield to Hazelwood

The study area within the segment from Driffield to Hazelwood is located within the Latrobe municipality, incorporating the survey area, which runs between the potential converter sites at Driffield and Hazelwood, respectively. The project alignment is proposed to run in an easterly orientation through the remaining HVP allotments before again entering agricultural land at its intersection with Yinnar Driffield Road. The land in this segment of the study area to the west of McFarlane Road is predominantly given over to agriculture and grazing on large allotments. Land to the east of McFarlane Road is divided into smaller agricultural allotments for cropping and rural residential uses.

7.3.7.2 Employment

Figure 7-13 shows employment in the agricultural sector within the two LGAs. The mixed agricultural enterprises (sheep, beef and grain farming) employ the greater share of the agricultural labour force in Latrobe City and dairy farming employs the greater share of the agricultural workforce in Gippsland Shire LGA.



ABS (2023a) Census of Population and Housing, 2021, TableBuilder
Figure 7-13 Agricultural sector employment by LGA

7.4 INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

This section describes the infrastructure and services that meet the needs and priorities of the affected community, including municipal and social infrastructure and associated services.

7.4.1 Governance

This section describes state, regional and local government plans for the regional and local study area. These plans identify governance and planning priorities, and community values, aspirations, and challenges at the regional and local scale for the communities within the regional study area.

7.4.1.1 State government energy plans

Victoria's Climate Change Strategy (2021)

The Victorian Government published their Climate Change Strategy to support the transition from coal-powered energy to renewables to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050. The strategy outcomes included (amongst others) the target that *50 per cent of Victoria's electricity will come from renewable sources by 2030.* The Climate Change Strategy also acknowledged that there would be an associated growth in emerging industries that would underpin the transition that workers and communities who are linked to industries in transition would require support to benefit from the new economic activities through helping workers to retrain and secure new jobs.

In November 2023, the Victorian Government released the *Climate Change and Energy Legislation Amendment (Renewable Energy and Storage Targets) Bill 2023*. The bill proposes a revised emissions reduction target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

7.4.1.2 Regional plans

Gippsland Regional Growth Plan 2014

The Gippsland Local Government Network (comprised of Bass Coast Shire Council, Baw Baw Shire Council, East Gippsland Shire Council, Latrobe City Council, South Gippsland Shire Council and Wellington Shire Council) and the Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure prepared the Regional Growth Plan in 2014. The plan has been endorsed by each council following consultation with their respective communities and provides broad direction for land use and development.

This plan identified the need for energy production to transition to a low-carbon platform and that the transition process would create opportunities to diversify the region's economic base. The plan also acknowledged that (2014:32) *there are likely to be opportunities to further increase production of wind energy although wind turbines and associated infrastructure will need to be carefully located to avoid impacts on landscape and housing*. However, the plan also sought to identify ways to protect and maintain Gippsland as Victoria's energy hub through its transition from coal to renewable energy.

Gippsland's Clean Energy Future (2022)

Regional Development Australia and the Gippsland Committee developed the Clean Energy Future Plan (2022) to identify opportunities for new industries by utilising the comparative advantages that the region possesses in their energy production and transmission. The vision contained in the strategy is to (2022:16) *establish Gippsland as a leading clean energy region creating highly valued, sustainable jobs and growth that underpins thriving local communities as part of the transition to net zero emissions*.

The three priority recommendations from the report include the following:

- Government and industry partnering to co-fund a series of flagship clean energy projects in Gippsland and deliver necessary regulatory reform to enable these projects.
- Support Gippsland's world-class CCS potential to secure investment by 2025 and enable a range of new clean industries to emerge, such as hydrogen and high-value carbon products.
- Develop and implement a Gippsland workforce transition and development plan that identifies local jobs from clean energy investments in the region and provide an orderly and just transition for current coal workers, younger people and service businesses.

Gippsland 2035: Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan (draft 2023)

The Latrobe Valley Authority was established in 2016 by the Victorian Government to support the region in its economic transition. At the time of writing this SIA, the Gippsland 2035: Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan (Transition Plan) is seeking public comment, and includes the following themes for consideration in its final vision statement:

- Education and training pathway options that link to employment in appealing.
- Meaningful local jobs.
- A thriving economy.
- A healthy, attractive and sustainable natural environment.
- Safe, welcoming and vibrant communities.

The draft Transition Plan focused on addressing the effects associated with changes in the forest industry and the energy sector. Forest workers will be transitioning out of native forest harvesting on state forests to working on plantations and farm forestry on private lands. The energy sector will transition from fossil fuel power (coal mining and coal-powered energy plans) to clean energy alternatives.

The draft Transition Plan acknowledges the challenges associated with reskilling the workforce to prepare for the transition and the support required to prepare the workforce for industry diversification and the need to address housing availability, affordability and diversity to improve social outcomes and attract new workers.

7.4.1.3 Local Government plans

This section provides an overview of the community and strategic plans that are applied by the local governments within the regional study area. The Vision and goals are articulated in each community plan and are summarised in Table 7-16.

Table 7-16 Community and strategic plan visions – regional study area

LGA and plan	Vision and Objectives	Goals/Objectives
South Gippsland LGA		
Shaping South Gippsland 'Community Vision 2040' (June 2022)	The Vision Statement (2022:8): • South Gippsland: celebrating our First Peoples, diverse populations, culture, heritage, environment, agriculture and industries. We support and empower positive change through education and action. • We sustainably adapt to protect and enhance our unique natural environment, towns and villages through community-led planning and initiatives.	Vision Priorities: • A Healthy, connected and engaged community • Sustainability and climate change • Shaping our Future • Enhanced natural environment and cultural heritage • A destination to live, visit and enjoy • We're an inclusive community, a place where people come to visit and want to stay."
Council Plan 2022 – 2026 (SGS) Using the Community Vision 2040, Council has developed the following six Strategic Objectives to guide Council from 2022 to 2026.	Leading with integrity: • Council will be outward-focused and engage regularly and genuinely with our community. • Council will provide and promote community leadership, investing in our people and the people of South Gippsland.	Connecting our people and places: • Improving the safety and condition of our sealed and gravel road networks and connectivity for residents and basic services is a major community and Council priority. Economy and industry: • Farming is our economic backbone, and we will actively encourage investment, partnership and new business aligned with our core rural and environmental values. • We see the arts and tourism as a way to share our story, to welcome newcomers and support economic growth, whilst communicating and protecting what's special about our environment and way of life. Healthy and engaged communities: • Our vision for South Gippsland is to be a place where our communities have a strong sense of belonging and purpose, where neighbours know each other, and new ideas are welcomed and encouraged. • We aim to create and encourage more all-ability, vibrant and engaging places to meet and undertake recreational and social activities. We will support and promote inclusive sporting, cultural and social activities, recognising these activities as key to our success in building healthy communities.

LGA and plan	Vision and Objectives	Goals/Objectives
		Protecting and enhancing our environment: • Agriculture, bushland, residential and tourism can thrive side by side. South Gippslanders will leave a legacy of a healthier integrated environment for future generations. • Our aim is to support appropriate regeneration and revegetation initiatives and the development of bio-link corridors, particularly around our waterways, and acknowledge the importance of protecting our agricultural land's biosecurity, whilst expanding biodiversity. We will do this with community partnerships, planning controls and weed and feral pest management education, and support for those who farm our lands. • Over the next four years, we will reduce landfill across the Shire via our circular waste strategy. Sustainable growth: • The unique environmental values and cultural heritage of our 28 towns, villages and hamlets are a drawcard to the region. We will protect the visual character of our landscapes and streetscapes via community plans, land-use reviews, environmental assessments and township design frameworks. • Council will plan for sustainable growth with an appropriate mix of residential properties, farming and lifestyle, industrial and commercial properties, encouraging affordable housing projects, options for aged and health care, and suitable investment in services, transport, childcare and open space. • We will consider the environmental and cultural impacts of growth and land use change in our actions and decision making.
Social and Affordable Housing Strategy (August 2022)	The Social and Affordable Housing Strategy (the Strategy) has been developed to support Council to facilitate affordable housing outcomes in the South Gippsland Shire. The Strategy sets out the role of Council and the principles that Council will adopt in delivering that role. The Strategy focuses on affordable housing. The community is facing broader issues around housing supply, the cost of market housing, and environmentally sustainable design but those are addressed in other strategic Council, State or Federal Government documents.	The Strategy sets out overarching principles for affordable housing in the South Gippsland Shire. There are then three key areas that reflect the role Council has adopted. They are: • Advocacy, engagement and partnerships. • Land use planning. • Incentives and opportunities.

LGA and plan	Vision and Objectives	Goals/Objectives
Latrobe City LGA		
Latrobe City Council Plan 2021-2025 (2021)	In 2031 Latrobe City will be known for being smart, creative, healthy, sustainable and connected. It will be the most liveable regional city and at the forefront of innovation. Working together, we are a diverse, connected and resilient community, supporting the equitable diversification of our economic base and transition towards a low emissions future. We are known as a community that is equitable, liveable and sustainable, with a continued focus on healthy lifestyles supported by high-quality recreational and cultural facilities and a natural environment that is nurtured and respected.	**Smart city:** Latrobe City has a highly skilled workforce, access to education and training and we are invested in growing the capacity of our community, supporting innovation and invention. We support the diversification of our industrial base and the development of opportunities for highly skilled employees in the future. **Creative:** We have a vibrant and diverse community where there are various opportunities for arts, culture and tourism. Our City has a range of arts and creative opportunities for the community to engage in creative expression and develop social connectedness. **Healthy:** Our vision is that Latrobe has a culture and environment that promotes and supports health and wellbeing for all. We will celebrate the places, people and cultures that make this a distinctive, vibrant and creative community. While we continue to build on our community's recognised and proven capacity for connection, social participation, volunteerism and care for one another. **Sustainable:** Our City has natural features and liveable areas that are easy to access, and our beautiful environment is our heart and pride. **Connected:** A regional City which recognises the connectedness between our goals and towns and efficiently utilises the assets that we have for the benefit of our whole community while protecting the environment.
Housing Strategy (May 2019)	The Live Work Latrobe strategies support the growth of Latrobe City to 100,000 residents to reinforce and fulfil its role as Gippsland's only Regional City. The Strategies encourage Morwell and Traralgon to grow together to create a single Regional City centre, supported by Moe-Newborough and Churchill. Latrobe City will compete strongly with other regional cities to attract investment, youth and skilled labour; meaning that factors such as employment, education, lifestyle, amenity and transport will be fundamental in supporting future growth.	The key components of this Strategy are: • Vision – Provides the overarching strategic vision for Latrobe's housing stock and residential areas • Housing Framework Plan & Settlement Hierarchy: ▪ Delineates areas for substantial, incremental, limited and minimal change. These areas will provide the basis for the application of the new residential zones and other planning controls as appropriate. ▪ Diversity & Design: Outlines objectives and actions relating to housing typologies and design including housing diversity, specialised housing types, design quality and universal housing. ▪ Affordability: Outlines objectives and actions relating to affordability and social housing. ▪ Sustainability: Outlines objectives and actions relating to the improvement of the environmental performance of existing and new housing stock.

7.4.2 Community infrastructure and services

7.4.2.1 Education

There are seven early learning and childcare centres, 11 primary and secondary school facilities, and 1 tertiary education facility situated in the local study area (Table 7-17). Facilities located near the project alignment are potentially sensitive social receptors, which can be affected during the construction phase. Table 7-17 shows the distance of each facility from the project alignment. All education facilities in the local study area are located at a distance exceeding 1 km from the project alignment.

Vocational education and training services in the regional study area are provided by TAFE Gippsland, which has regional campuses in Leongatha, Yallourn, Morwell, Traralgon, Warragul, Bairnsdale, and Sale. All of these are located outside of the local study area.

Federation University, Australia Gippsland campus, is located in Churchill. The campus facility is located 2.5 km away from the project alignment. This was formerly a campus of Monash University. Monash University continues to run a rural health medical program from what is now the Gippsland campus of Federation University. The Federation University Australia Gippsland campus offers a range of facilities, including a lecture theatre and video conferencing facilities, library facility and study centre, computing labs, on-campus fitness and recreation facilities, student accommodation and other sports and development facilities.

Table 7-17 Educational facilities in the local study area

Facility name	Enrolment	Type	Level	Distance from alignment (km)
Early learning and childcare				
Boolarra Kindergarten	-	Centre-based care and kindergarten	-	4.5
Churchill Central Preschool	-	Centre-based care and kindergarten	-	2.5
Federation Children's Centre Churchill	-	Centre-based care, long day care	-	2.4
Fish Creek Kindergarten	-	Centre-based care and kindergarten	-	5.9
Glendonald Kindergarten (Churchill)	-	Centre-based care and kindergarten	-	3.5
Tarwin Valley Preschool	-	Centre-based care, kindergarten	-	4.0
Mirboo North Early Learning Centre	-	Centre-based Care. Long day care, kindergarten	-	2.4
Primary and secondary schools				
Boolarra Primary School	40	Public	Primary	4.3
Churchill North Primary School	157	Public	Primary	1.6
Churchill Primary School	173	Public	Primary	2.0
Hazelwood North Primary School	167	Public	Primary	2.3 (from Hazelwood converter station)
Narracan Primary School	23	Public	Primary	5.5 (from Driffield converter station)

Facility name	Enrolment	Type	Level	Distance from alignment (km)
Fish Creek & District Primary School	114	Public	Primary	6.3
Lumen Christi School	95	Private	Primary	2.7
Mirboo North Primary School	314	Public	Primary	2.8
Meeniyan Primary School	153	Public	Primary	3.3
Kurnai College – Churchill Campus	1104*	Public	Secondary	2.3
Mirboo North Secondary College	402	Public	Secondary	2.9
Tertiary education				
Federation University – Gippsland Campus		Public	Tertiary	2.4

**enrolment figures are combined for multiple campuses*
Source: ACECQA (2023); ACARA (2023)

7.4.2.2 Health services and hospitals

The regional study area is served by the Gippsland Primary Health Network (PHN). There are 10 public hospitals and three private hospitals within the Gippsland PHN. Details regarding the services of each hospital facility are given in Table 7-18.

Any health facilities located in proximity to the project alignment are potentially sensitive social receptors, the services of which can be affected during the construction phase because of their proximity to the project alignment. None of the hospital facilities fall within the local study area (the distance of the closest facilities is provided in Table 7-18.

Table 7-18 Hospitals – regional study area and remaining Gippsland PHN

Hospital name	Local hospital Network	Description of services
Regional study area		
Korumburra Hospital Leongatha Memorial Hospital	Gippsland Southern Health Service	• Gippsland Southern Health Service Korumburra and Leongatha campuses provide urgent care, acute, residential aged care, and allied health and community medical services. (Gippsland Southern Health Service, 2022)
Latrobe Regional Hospital [Traralgon]	Latrobe Regional Hospital (LRH)	• Latrobe Regional Hospital is the primary medical centre in the Gippsland region, catering for a population of more than 260,000 people (Latrobe Regional Hospital, 2015). LRH contains 261 beds. • LRH offers the largest range of surgical and medical care in the region and is the main provider of mental health services. The hospital is dedicated to teaching and providing opportunities for local students from Monash University's School of Rural Health and Federation University. • Latrobe Regional Hospital is one of the closest hospitals to the local study area, situated 8 km from the project alignment (Hazelwood station).
South Gippsland Hospital	South Gippsland Hospital	• South Gippsland Hospital is a small public hospital located in Foster. It has a 16-bed capacity that offers a combination of acute services and community care.

Hospital name	Local hospital Network	Description of services
		• South Gippsland Hospital is one of the closest hospitals to the local study area, situated at a distance of 17 km from the project alignment.
Maryvale Private Hospital	Private	• Maryvale Private Hospital offers a various range of surgical and consulting services. The hospital has 46 beds serving mostly the local Gippsland community. (Maryvale Private Hospital, 2023). • Maryvale Private Hospital is one of the closest hospitals to the local study area, situated 7.5 km from the closest point along the project alignment.
Bass Coast Health – Wonthaggi Hospital	Bass Coast Health	• Bass Coast Health is a major public medical network in the South Gippsland region. Bass Coast Health offers a range of services such as acute, sub-acute, ancillary, aged and ambulatory medical care. (Bass Coast Health, 2023) • Based in Wonthaggi, Bass Coast Health is situated approximately 38 km west of the project alignment.
Yarram & District Health Service	Yarram and District Health Service	• Yarram and District Health Service is a public medical facility located in rural Victoria and serves the township of Yarram. It is a 20-bed hospital featuring acute care services, including a 24-hour accident and emergency facility, general medical and postsurgical care, rehabilitation, respite, dialysis and palliative care (Yarram District Health Service, 2022). • This hospital is located approximately 50 km from the project alignment.

Source: Hospitals and health services directory 2023, Victorian Agency for Health Information

Gippsland PHN has a lower number of medical practitioners than that in Victoria. It has 272 medical practitioners per 100,000 people compared to 421 for Victoria. Similarly, Gippsland PHN has half the psychologists (47 per 100,000 people) than that of Victoria (103 per 100,000 people) (Gippsland Primary Health Network, 2020).

An examination of the healthcare workforce employed at the LGA level reveals a similar trend in the regional study area. Both South Gippsland and Latrobe City LGAs have a lower number of medical and dental practitioners per 10,000 population than Victoria (Table 7-19). In 2020, South Gippsland LGA has a significantly lower number of medical (23.2) and dental practitioners (5.3) per 100,000 population than Latrobe City (medical practitioners 41.5 and dental 6.1) and Victoria (45.6 medical and 8.7 dental practitioners). A low number of medical practitioners within a region can increase the number of emergency presentations at the hospitals and create service capacity issues for ambulance and hospital services.

Table 7-19 Health workforce per 100,000 population – regional study area

Profession	2020			2019			2018		
	Latrobe City	South Gippsland	Victoria	Latrobe City	South Gippsland	Victoria	Latrobe City	South Gippsland	Victoria
Medical Practitioners	41.5	23.2	45.6	40.1	21.1	44.7	39.5	19.9	43.4
Dental Practitioners	6.1	5.3	8.7	6.2	4.3	8.7	7.3	5.1	8.5
Nurses and Midwives	214.5	148.9	169.3	210.2	140.2	164.9	198.9	136.6	162.7

Source: PHIDU Torrens University Australia, Health Workforce Data Tool (2023)

7.4.2.3 Ambulance services

Ambulance Victoria is the statutory authority, reporting to the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria, which manages ambulance services across the State of Victoria. The nearest Ambulance Victoria

branch to the project alignment is located in Morwell. Other nearby ambulance branches are shown in Table 7-20.

Table 7-20 Ambulance locations near the project study area

Ambulance branch location	Company	Distance from the project (km)
Morwell	Ambulance Victoria	5
Moe	Ambulance Victoria	13
Foster	Ambulance Victoria	15
Traralgon	Ambulance Victoria	17
Leongatha	Ambulance Victoria	15
Korumburra	Ambulance Victoria	43
Yarram (To be constructed)	Ambulance Victoria	53

Sources: Victorian Health Building Authority (2023)

7.4.2.4 Fire services

Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) is a statutory body responsible for managing fire emergencies in Victoria and reports to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. There are 85 FRV fire and rescue stations across the state of Victoria, 38 of which are in regional Victoria and are co-located with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) volunteer brigades. CFA is Victoria's volunteer fire service. Under the CFA program, Victoria has five fire regions. Among those regions, there are 21 districts. The regional study area falls under the South-East fire region in districts 09 and 27. Table 7-21 details the FRV CFA fire stations that are located in the local study area and the district headquarters.

Table 7-21 Fire stations near the local study area and fire district headquarters

Fire station location	CFA District	Details
Fish Creek	District 09	CFA Station
Foster	District 09	CFA Station
Meeniyan and Stony Creek	District 09	CFA Station
Dumbalk	District 09	CFA Station
Mirboo North	District 09	CFA Station
Warragul	District 09	District headquarters
Boolarra	District 27	CFA Station
Yinnar South	District 27	CFA Station
Churchill	District 27	CFA Station
Hazelwood North	District 27	CFA Station
Traralgon	District 27	FRV and CFA station
Morwell	District 27	District headquarters

Source: CFA (2021); FRV (2021)

7.4.2.5 Police services

Victoria Police is the authoritative policing force in the state of Victoria. The state is comprised of 333 police stations, of which four are located in the local study area at Meeniyan, Mirboo North, Boolarra and Churchill

(State Government of Victoria, 2023). Other stations in the regional study area are found in Foster, Moe, Morwell and Trafalgar.

7.4.3 Transport

Transport infrastructure supports the liveability in the study area and has the potential to be affected by the project activities. The road network supports regional access and underpins the viability of the agricultural sector, such as getting produce to the markets and inputs such as fertiliser and cattle feed to the farm.

There are many schools within the region (Table 7-17), some of which may have frontages that may be utilised by the project or workforce. EIS/EES Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport, summarised the baseline characteristics as:

- With the exception of the transformer transporter, the existing B-double road network is adequate for use by all other project-generated traffic.
- Sight distance at all key intersections has been assessed and is generally adequate. In instances where sight distance is below minimum standards, an adequate warning to drivers via signage is provided.
- Arterial roads, highways and freeways are able to accommodate the movement of large vehicles. They are regularly maintained to ensure the road surface is in adequate condition to accommodate these vehicles. As such, these roads have been assessed as being able to accommodate the project-generated construction traffic volumes.
- There have been 181 crashes within travel routes in the project area over the last five years, with six crashes resulting in injury.
- The project will have minimal interactions with public transport services, with school bus route details subject to change each year but considered within the assessment.
- Latrobe City's four major towns – Moe, Morwell, Churchill and Traralgon are linked through strong bus and trail connections. The V/Line rail services run every hour between Melbourne and Traralgon.
- South Gippsland has no direct public transport; bus connections run from train stations in Latrobe City.

7.4.3.1 Tenure

Social and affordable housing supports the productivity of socially and economically vulnerable people through improved education, health, and wellbeing outcomes. If socially and economically vulnerable individuals and families do not have access to social and/or affordable housing, then they are excluded from accessing education and employment, which in turn affects their health and wellbeing.

Table 7-22 describes the tenure and landlord type in the local and regional study areas. The rate of home ownership was higher in all LGAs than by comparison to the state (68.3%). Similarly, the proportion of rented properties were lower in the regional and local study areas than that of the state (28.5%).

State-owned housing comprised only 7.4% of the tenancies in South Gippsland LGA and 7.2% in the local study area. Latrobe City had a much higher proportion of state-owned homes (15.2%), but this rate was below the state at 16.4%.

Of the rental properties, real estate agents in South Gippsland and the local study area accounted for nearly half of the landlord types and 30.3% of landlords were a person not from the same household in South Gippsland LGA and 29.2% in the local study area. Whereas in Latrobe City LGA, the proportion of rentals from a real estate agent is higher at 59.8% by comparison to nearly three-quarters. 6%) of managed rental tenancies in the state of Victoria from real estate agents. Similarly, the proportion of landlords that are described as a person not from the same household was low at 18.3% in Latrobe City LGA and 15.4% for the state.

Table 7-22 Tenure and landlord type – local and regional study areas

	South Gippsland	Latrobe City	Local study area	Victoria
Tenure type				
Owned	80.5%	71.1%	79.6%	68.3%
Rented	15.2%	25.4%	17.3%	28.5%
Other tenure type	2.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.7%
Not stated	2.0%	2.1%	1.8%	1.5%
Rental Tenure				
Real estate agent	49.6%	59.8%	49.3%	72.6%
State or territory housing authority	7.4%	15.2%	16.4%	7.2%
Community housing provider	3.6%	3.2%	1.2%	1.7%
Person not in the same household	30.3%	18.3%	29.2%	15.4%
Other landlord type	7.9%	2.5%	3.8%	2.5%
Landlord type not stated	1.3%	0.9%	0.0%	0.5%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.5 PEOPLE'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITIES

This section describes the population's health, skills, knowledge and experience that enable them to participate in society and the economy.

7.5.1 Health

Social wellbeing is a central component of health. It is increasingly recognised that mental health is shaped by the broader social, economic and physical environment in which people live (WHO 2014). Measuring wellbeing is complex and there is no 'standard' way to understand social wellbeing. Therefore, it is necessary to select available indicators of wellbeing. The WHO (2014) notes that there are a number of socioeconomic factors that are linked to poor wellbeing, including relative socioeconomic disadvantage and weak social support. The former of these is discussed in Section 7.3.6.

7.5.1.1 Mental Health

Data presented in Table 7-23 describe the proportion of the population who experience a mental health condition. The proportion of the Victorian population who have a mental health condition is 7.5%. Whereas Latrobe City LGA and the local study area have higher proportions within their communities who experience a mental health condition of 9.6% and 9.1%, respectively. The Gippsland PHN has access to half the number of psychologists that the rest of Victoria, which can affect people's capacity to participate in the workforce and in society.

Table 7-23 Mental health conditions – local and regional study area

Location	Has a mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	Does not have a mental health condition (including depression or anxiety)	Not stated%
South Gippsland	7.8%	84.3%	7.3%
Latrobe City	9.6%	80.9%	8.2%
Local study area	9.1%	81.8%	8.5%
Victoria	7.5%	85.0%	6.5%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021
Note: ABS data includes responses, not the total number of individuals. Individuals can respond to multiple health conditions, which will be included in the total.

7.5.1.2 Need for Support

The purpose of this question within the Census is to identify people with a 'profound or severe core activity limitation' (ABS, 2022). The activity limitation is defined as people who need assistance in their day-to-day lives with any or all of the following core activities – self-care, mobility or communication because of a disability, long-term health condition (lasting six months or more) or old age and applies to all persons (ABS 2016).

Table 7-24 describes the proportion of the population within the local and regional study area that require support. The local and regional study areas have a higher need for assistance with core activities compared to the state at 5.9% and Latrobe City LGA has the highest proportion at 8.4%. This data also indicates that the proportion of the population that needs support will also require a corresponding need for health services, respite centres and carers to enable this portion of the community to participate in society.

Table 7-24 Need for support local and regional study areas

Location	Has need for assistance with core activities %	Does not have need for assistance with core activities %	Not stated%
South Gippsland	6.4%	86.9%	6.7%
Latrobe City	8.4%	84.1%	7.5%
Local study area	6.8%	85.6%	7.6%
Victoria	5.9%	88.7%	5.4%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.5.1.3 Health conditions

The 2021 Census introduced a new set of questions on diagnosed long-term health conditions. Table 7-25 describes the proportion of the local and regional study areas that reported one or more long-term health conditions. The data provides insight into the communities and their need for services to support their health needs. This data shows that the proportion of the community within the local and regional study area that has one or more long-term health conditions is higher than the state at 27.4%. One-third of the residents in South Gippsland LGA and the local study area have one or more long-term health conditions. In contrast, Latrobe City LGA is slightly higher at 35.7% of the population who experience one or more long-term health conditions.

Table 7-25 Long term health conditions – local and regional study area

Location	Has one or more other long-term health conditions %	Does not have any other long-term health conditions %	Not stated%
South Gippsland	33.8%	56.1%	10.4%
Latrobe City	35.7%	53.9%	10.4%
Local study area	33.8%	56.2%	10.0%
Victoria	27.4%	65.0%	7.6%

Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.5.2 First Peoples wellbeing

The wellbeing of First Peoples is a key priority as outlined in the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country-Plan (2015). The Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country-Plan sets our seven strategic goals with top priority being "the well-being of our mob". Furthermore, the plan highlights the following: *More than just physical health and security, it is about being respected, having stable employment and housing, and maintaining a strong spiritual connection with our Country and our ancestors.*

7.5.3 Educational attainment

Table 7-26 details the highest level of educational attainment for people over the age of 15 within the regional and local study areas compared to that of the state at the 2021 Census. The local and regional study areas had lower proportions of their population that had achieved higher than a bachelor's degree than the state, and higher proportions of their population who had achieved a Certificate 3.

Table 7-26 Highest level of educational achievement – local and regional study areas

Level	South Gippsland		Latrobe (Vic.)		Local study area*		Victoria	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bachelor Degree level and above	4,198	16.5	1761	15.8%	7,969	12.5%	1,557,447	29.2
Advanced Diploma and Diploma level	2,321	9.1	965	8.6%	5,083	8.0%	521,291	9.8
Certificate level IV	1,001	3.9	482	4.3%	2,955	4.6%	179,000	3.4
Certificate level III	4,300	16.9	2068	18.5%	11,721	18.4%	580,494	10.9
Year 12	2,899	11.4	1347	12.1%	7,468	11.7%	797,281	14.9
Year 11	2,317	9.1	946	8.5%	5,190	8.2%	304,927	5.7
Year 10	2,634	10.4	1121	10.0%	7,318	11.5%	389,680	7.3
Certificate level II	21	0.1	9	0.1%	72	0.1%	3,250	0.1
Certificate level I	-	0	0	0.0%	15	0.0%	647	0
Year 9 or below	2,572	10.1	1055	9.5%	7,290	11.5%	422,139	7.9
Inadequately described	549	2.2	222	2.0%	1,106	1.7%	111,674	2.1
No educational attainment	62	0.2	24	0.2%	360	0.6%	59,722	1.1
Not stated	2,545	10	1161	10.4%	7,063	11.1%	406,049	7.6

**Note that Darlimurla, Delburn, Driffield and Waratah Bay were excluded from the local study area as the population was too small.*
Source: ABS (2023), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

7.5.4 Training and industry development programs

The Victorian Government developed the *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023 – 2033* to inform government planning and investment in the skills and training to reach Victoria's net-zero emission targets.

7.5.5 Workforce skills and availability

This section considers the availability of a suitably qualified workforce to service the project, including the identification of any potential workforce shortages.

AEMO is responsible for planning Victoria's transmission network and through its Integrated Supply Plan (ISP), this project has been identified as a means to assist in meeting net zero emissions goals. The electricity workforce that is required to support the ISP for the development of the NEM to 2050 has been modelled by the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney. Accordingly, Rutovitz, Langdon, Mey and Briggs (2023a) maintain that:

- The combined national workforce for the renewable energy generation, storage and transmission construction needs an additional 12,000 employees by 2025.
- Overall employment in the electricity sector is predicted to grow by 37,000 from 2023 to 81,000 in 2049.
- Construction dominates the demand for workers through the 2020s as the renewable energy, transmission and storage projects come online.
- A 'boom bust' demand for electricity construction workers is probable, which creates significant risks for labour supply. This will be further exacerbated by competing demands for infrastructure construction in other parts of the economy and the absence of an available skilled labour force in rural areas where much of the energy infrastructure will be located.
- Ongoing operations employment gradually increases as renewable energy projects are realised and is predicted to comprise 50% of the electricity workforce by 2040.

The Victorian Government has acknowledged that new skills are required across Victoria, particularly in regional areas, as new energy generation, transmission and distribution forms are approved for construction. To identify the range of skills and the required workforce to support the ISP, the Victorian Government established the Clean Economy Workforce Skills and Jobs Taskforce. In 2023, the Taskforce delivered the *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023 – 2033*, a 10-year framework to guide government, industry and the workforce as Victoria transitions to net-zero emissions by 2045. The strategy identified five strategic priorities to drive the workforce transition:

- Targeted skills model
- Flexible education and training
- Timing provision of education and training
- Enhanced workforce planning and attraction
- Stewardship of the skills transition.

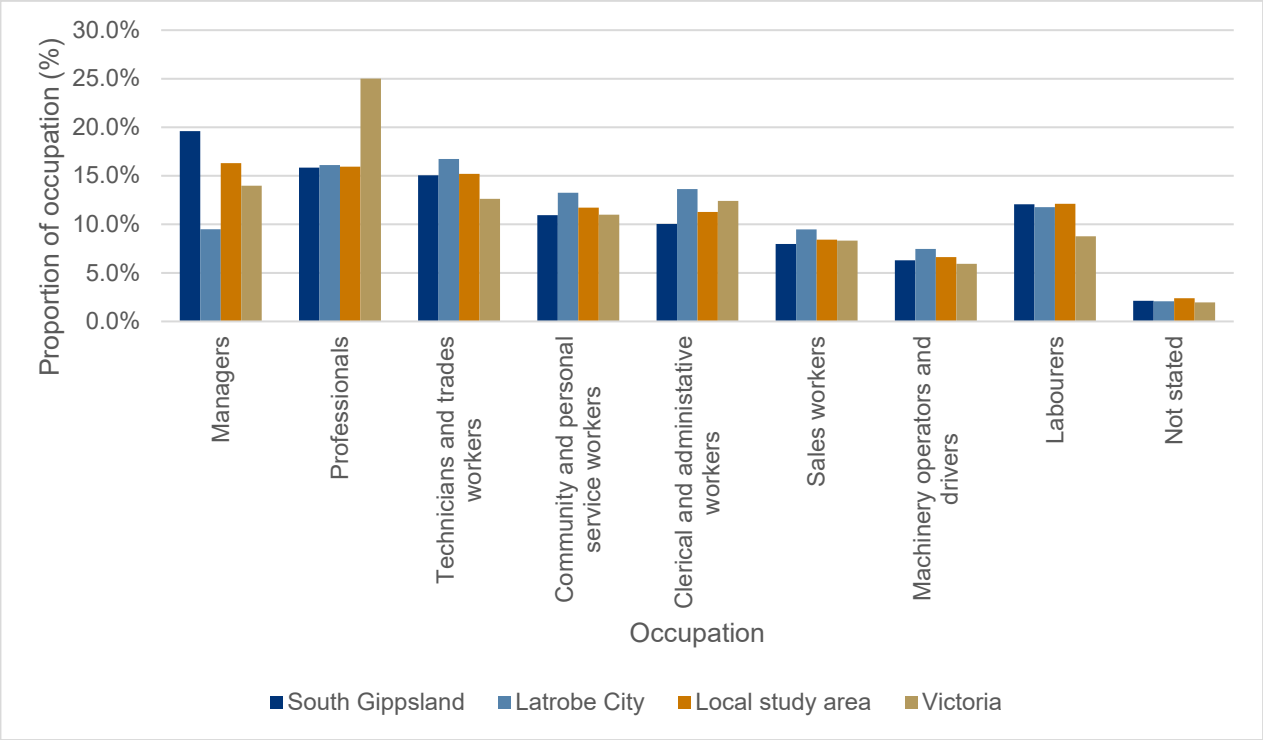
The Gippsland Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) is one of five REZs in Victoria, and as such, workforce skills have been the subject of several studies that examine electricity generation and transmission construction. Rutovitz, Langdon, Mey and Briggs (2023a) examined the electricity sector workforce projections for Victoria, including the development of the Gippsland REZ, according to three scenarios. The most likely scenario, 'Step Change,' is characterised (Rutovitz et al. 2023b) '*as a rapid consumer-led transformation of the energy sector and coordinated economy-wide action moving fast to fulfil Australia's net zero policy commitments*'.

Under the Step Change scenario, employment associated with the Gippsland REZ will be an average of 600 full time equivalent jobs between 2023 and 2049. The proportion of which will be attributed to transmission is not yet clear.

A review of the occupational profile of the local and regional study areas was undertaken to assess the local workforce's existing skills capacity (see Figure 7-14 below).

Key trends are discussed below:

- Managers is the major occupation reported in South Gippsland LGA (19.6%), exceeding the proportion reported in Victoria (14.0%). In Latrobe City LGA, the proportion of managers is significantly less at 9.5%.
- The larger proportion of the workforce in the local and regional study areas is employed as labourers (around 12%) than that in the state (8.8%).
- Latrobe City LGA has a slightly higher proportion of workers who work as technicians and trades workers (16.7%) than in the local study area (15.2%) and South Gippsland LGA (15.0%).



Source: ABS (2023a), Census of Population and Housing, 2021

Figure 7-14 Percentage of occupations in the regional and local study areas

7.5.6 Project workforce profile

This section provides an overview of the project's workforce profile and includes the anticipated workforce size and duration of employment for major construction activities. The anticipated source of the construction workforce is also provided.

It should be noted that EIS/EES Technical Appendix B: Economics prepared by SGS Economics and Planning (SGS) identified potential negative externalities associated with labour supply. Demand for labour primarily during construction phases of the project and induced investments creates competition with ongoing labour supply needs in support of the Gippsland region's agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors. During the five-year construction phase, businesses in agriculture, forestry and fishing may find attracting and retaining workers more difficult. As such, key mitigating strategies could include efforts to grow the overall size of the

regional workforces in Gippsland through training and engagement, as well as direct efforts to attracting new labour supply (residents) to the region.

7.5.6.1 Construction workforce

Construction of the project will commence in 2025 and the project is expected to be operational by 2030, with Stage 2 to follow, with final timing to be determined by market demand. The construction workforce is expected to peak at approximately 671 FTEs in 2027 in Gippsland.

Marine cable, Bass Strait

Subsea cable laying ships work worldwide and move from job to job, with ships typically booked many months in advance. The work is highly specialised, and the crews tend to stay with these ships when they move to a new job. Two ships will be used in this operation: one cable-laying vessel with the bulk of the workforce and a major ancillary vessel with less crew for burying the cable. There will be two cable installation campaigns (2027 and 2029) and these operations will use the same vessels. Subsea cable installation will continue throughout 2029 alongside testing and commissioning activities and terrestrial landscaping and rehabilitation. There are expected to be 80 to 100 crew on each cable-laying ship to enable multiple shifts for 24/7 operations over the time that the subsea cables are laid. Not all the crew will travel with the ship and up to 50% are expected to arrive in Australia by plane. The crews arriving by plane will therefore stay onshore for a short period in Victoria prior to commencing and immediately after the subsea cable laying. During cable laying, however, the crew will stay on the ship for the duration of the work. Crew rotations typically occur every 4 weeks, with the off crew taking leave onshore in Australia or at home overseas.

Transition station, Waratah Bay, Victoria

If the transition station is required, the construction workforce is estimated to be up to 22 workers on site. The same assumptions applied to the Driffield converter station have been applied to the transition station. It is anticipated that 87% will be local/state workers (e.g. 45% local and 42% state) with 5% from interstate. This will present approximately 47% of the workforce seeking accommodation local to site area in close-by townships such as Hazelwood and Morwell.

Land cable, Waratah Bay to Driffield or Hazelwood, Victoria

Contractors will coordinate teams of crews on the ground. Total civil construction duration for land cabling is currently expected to be 36 months. There would then be another 50 workers for 18 months for cable pulling and jointing.

It is assumed at this stage that the overall workforce for the land cable construction, which will be in the construction corridor at the same time across the project alignment, will include the following:

Land cabling:

- 125 full time equivalents (FTE) for 36 months sources from the Australian workforce for civil works for both stages.

Cable pulling and jointing:

- 30 FTEs for 18 months sourced from the Australian workforce for cable pulling for each stage. This occurs after the civil works are completed for a cable section.
- 20 FTEs for 18 months sourced from the international workforce for cable jointing for each stage. The cable jointing occurs after the cable pulling.

Converter station – Driffield or Hazelwood, Victoria

The number of construction workers required during the construction phase is expected to peak at approximately 180 persons per day for converter stations (assume all in the same shift). The workforce will be made up of local, intrastate, interstate and international personnel depending on the complexity of the work

and the requirement for specialist skills and equipment. The Driffield and Hazelwood converter stations are expected to take up to 44 months to construct. Construction will occur at the converter station six days per week, between 7:00am and 4:00pm.

For the Driffield location, it is anticipated that 87% will be local/state workers. This results in approximately 47% of the workforce seeking accommodation local to the site area in close-by townships, such as Hazelwood and Morwell.

7.5.6.2 Operations workforce

Routine maintenance will typically involve access by one to two individuals in a four-wheel drive vehicle with a frequency of no more often than every three months. This work will be completed between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

To ensure power system security and maintain reliable network service, the project may need to mobilise additional work crews and vehicles to resolve specific site issues.

In general, land cables are typically maintenance-free, with routine maintenance being limited to a number of smaller activities around the jointing pits. These activities will be sheath tests every five-year involving 2 workers for 1 day at each joint bay. They will have a standard 4-wheel drive vehicle and use handheld testing equipment. Typically, a route drive over will occur around once a fortnight to ensure that no unknown construction activities or non-permitted activities are occurring above the cables.

For the subsea cables, monitoring systems will be installed to identify the location of a cable fault. Seabed inspection using a remotely operated vehicle will occur periodically. No exclusion zone will be established over the subsea cables.

7.5.6.3 Economic value-add to local and state employment

The project will generate direct employment for construction and operation, however it will also generation a significant number of indirect jobs in Victoria. This value-added to the economy creates significant local and state employment across various industries, including construction, professional services, retail, manufacturing and accommodation and food services.

SGS Economics and Planning undertook economic modelling as part of EIS/EES Technical Appendix B: Economics. This adopted an integrated approach incorporating Australia wide, Victorian and Tasmanian impacts. This analysis uses Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling techniques and an assessment period of 25 years from 2025 to 2050. The modelling traces the spending and employment impacts at the state level, but also outline the impact on the regional communities where the infrastructure will be developed and operated. Where results are presented for Victoria, the estimates include the impact in Gippsland. Therefore, regional and state impacts should not be added together.

The SGC modelling assessed the construction and operation of the project over the period 2025-2050: The findings are as follows:

- The construction phase of the project (2025-2029) adds to the Gippsland economy over a five-year period. This includes direct and flow-on economic expenditures through the supply chains for constructing the project. Extending the impact to the state level, construction adds $1.4 billion to the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland). This construction phase also includes the first half year of operations as the project comes online in the second half of 2029.
- The ongoing operation of the project from 2030 adds $361 million to the Gippsland economy over a twenty-year period, which includes the direct operational expenditure and its flow-on impacts. At a state level, the operational phase adds $981 billion to the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland).

The project has a lifespan of 40 years, and the operational impacts can be expected to continue beyond 2050.

This value-added to the economy creates significant local and state employment across various industries, including construction, professional services, retail, manufacturing and accommodation and food services. In total, these are as follows:

- The construction phase for the project creates 2,159 Gippsland over the five year construction period. Peak employment comes in 2027, when 671 in Gippsland. At the state level, construction adds 5,247 job-years to the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland) over the five year construction period.
- The ongoing expenditure for the operation of the project adds 388 FTE jobs to the Gippsland economy between 2030 and 2050. This corresponds to 15 FTE jobs in Gippsland. Extending the impact to the state level, the operation of the project adds 592 FTE jobs to the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland).

8. SOCIAL WELLBEING VALUES, POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

8.1.1 Social value sensitivity

This section and Table 8-1 presents the sensitivity assessment of the key social values identified from the SIA consultation and the social baseline. It also summarises the potential impacts and benefits to the social values discussed in Section 9.

The social wellbeing framework (Table 5-2) is used to guide the identification of the key social values; the outcomes from the SIA engagement inform the social impact and the sensitivity of these values have been assessed using the sensitivity criteria described in Table 5-3.

Table 8-1 Social value sensitivity

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
Community identity **Describes how a community defines itself in terms of civic participation, resilience, feelings of trust and safety and sense of belonging and place**	Social capital and community cohesion	Very sensitive	This sensitivity rating was determined based on consultation, indicating that this aspect of the social environment is highly important to the study area. Stakeholders indicated they were passionate about protecting their strong sense of community.	No expected project impacts.
	First Peoples values, cultural diversity and heritage	Very sensitive	This sensitivity rating was determined based on consultation that indicated this aspect of the social environment is of high importance and has limited capacity to adapt to change. The importance of First Peoples culture was highlighted during the consultation.	**Potential negative impact:** The project's establishment may result in losing Aboriginal cultural heritage values, both on land and oceanside.
	Amenity and landscape	Very sensitive	This sensitivity rating was determined based on the consultation that indicated the high value of amenity in contributing materially to the livelihood and health of the people in the study area. Stakeholders highly value landscapes in agricultural areas, conservation reserves, national bushlands and beaches. Consultation also indicated a strong social value with recreational fishing.	**Potential negative impact:** Amenity impacts from construction activities, such as dust and noise and visual impacts may impact the community's strong values linked to character and amenity. **Potential negative impact:** The project's construction activities may result in temporary changes to the amenity and character that reduce the use of the marine environment beaches, state forests and nature reserves used by the community and are highly valued.
	Land use and natural resources	Very sensitive	Consultation has indicated a strong community value around land use and natural resources and that it contributes materially to the livelihoods of people within the study area. Specifically, it was noted the importance of farms, revegetation projects and native vegetation and wildlife.	**Potential negative impact:** Impacts on environmental conditions may occur during or after construction, and may be direct in nature, such as the removal of a tree, or indirect, such as the release of sediment into waterways and the associated impacts to habitat downstream.

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
	Ecology	Very sensitive	Any impact on threatened species will have a very sensitive rating, given this importance to the community. Recreational groups highlighted this during consultation.	**Potential negative impact:** The project survey area and surrounding landscape identified 49 threatened fauna species and 27 threatened flora species. Any impacts, direct or indirect, to threatened species will be of major significance to people within the study area.
	Community safety	Very sensitive	The sensitivity rating was determined as very sensitive in line with the community consultation undertaken for the *Latrobe City Council Plan 2021-2025* – safety was raised as a key area with high community interest. It contributes materially to the safety of people within the study area.	No expected project impacts. However, this social value should be considered when the workforce housing strategy is developed.
Economy and livelihood **Describes how people make a living and the economic structure of the affected community.**	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	This sensitivity rating was determined based on the consultation and baseline study that highlights the importance of employment in the region in contributing materially to livelihood. Stakeholder feedback further highlighted the importance of employment and workforce training opportunities as the region's workforce transitions away from coal sector power.	**Potential positive impact:** The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% within the local and regional study area, which aligns with the values of the community in expanding local employment opportunities and industries.
				Potential positive impact: The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce from the state and national workforce.
				Potential positive impact: The project may contribute to a diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities and skills training opportunities for residents across a range of skill levels. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food services.

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
				Potential positive impact: The project's construction may contribute to existing and predicted demand for the construction sector, which may require formalised workforce training and development in the local and regional study area.
				Potential positive impact: The project's operation is expected to support the employment of three direct employees within the local and regional study areas.
				Potential negative impact: The project's construction may increase the demand for construction workers and attract employees away from local businesses. This may reduce the availability of these workers for other industries and result in increased lead times for other types of construction and a shortage of workers for local businesses.
	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Consultation has indicated a strong community value around local industry and business, with it contributing materially to the livelihoods of people within the study area. Specifically, stakeholders indicated a strong focus and value on buying and supporting local businesses.	**Potential positive impact:** The project's construction will support local businesses by purchasing goods and services required to support the project's development.
				Potential negative impact: Tourism accommodation could be constrained due to the construction workforce using short-term accommodation providers. This may result in lower tourists visiting the region impacting on revenue for regional tourism operators and local businesses such as retail and food services.
				Potential negative impact: Disruption to commercial fishing activities during installation of the subsea cable in Bass Strait.
	Industry and business (First Peoples-led)	Very sensitive	Consultation highlighted the potential for the project to offer new opportunities for First Peoples businesses.	**Potential positive impact:** The project may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples businesses to provide services and

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
				activities which support workforces on the ground as the project progresses.
	Industry and business (agriculture and forestry)	Very sensitive	Agriculture and forestry were noted as a key livelihood of people in the South Gippsland region.	**Potential negative impact:** Disruption to agricultural and forestry activities, including restricted access to onsite infrastructure that will reduce productivity.
				Potential negative impact: Reduced productivity yields of the agricultural and forestry enterprises from damage caused by construction activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation.
				Potential negative impact: Risk to biosecurity through the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.
				Potential negative impact: Reduced productivity or yields to the agricultural or forestry enterprises from damage caused by operation activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation.
				Potential negative impact: Reduced economic and environmental viability of the agricultural and forestry enterprises from damage caused to soil and water quality caused by incursions from project operation and maintenance activities.
				Potential negative impact: (operations): Introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases, or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from maintenance and operational activities created through the

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
				movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.
	Housing affordability and availability	Very Sensitive	A rating of sensitive was determined based on the consultation that indicates this value contributes to the livelihood and health of people in the study area. Stakeholders noted there is a limited supply of rental properties in the region.	**Potential negative impact:** The project's workforce may contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, disproportionately affecting very low and low-income households.
	Economy and livelihood	Very sensitive	Economic prosperity is of importance to the study area and in line with this a very sensitive rating has been determined.	**Potential positive impact:** The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government **Potential positive impact:** The project may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples' businesses to provide services that support activities and workforces on the ground as the project progresses
Infrastructure and services **Describes the infrastructure and services that meet the needs and priorities of the affected community, including municipal and social infrastructure and associated services.**	Community infrastructure and services – health and wellbeing	Sensitive	A rating of sensitive was determined based on the consultation that indicates this value contributes to the livelihood and health of people in the study area.	**Potential negative impact:** The project's construction workforce may increase demand for emergency service providers, compromising service provision to the existing local and regional community. The baseline confirms that both LGAs have fewer medical and dental practitioners per capita than Victoria. Consultation with health service providers further highlighted the issue and that there are challenges with attracting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and podiatrists.
	Physical infrastructure – safety and capacity	Very sensitive	A rating of very sensitive was determined based on the consultation that indicates this value contributes to the livelihood and health of people in the study area. Safety and the capacity of the local road network are highly valued by the study area.	**Potential negative impact:** The capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project.

Social value	Attributes and indicators	Sensitivity	Justification for sensitivity rating	Potential projects impacts (positive and negative)
People's productive capacities **Describes the skills, knowledge, and experience that are vital to survival and participation in society and its economy.**	Health – physical and mental	Very sensitive	A rating of very sensitive has been determined based on mental health contributing materially to the livelihoods of people within the study area. This was supported by the consultation feedback.	**Potential negative impact:** The project's planning and construction will require an investment of time by landholders and may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration.
				Potential negative impact: Concern about the project's potential impacts (e.g. EMF) may result in stress, anxiety and frustration for surrounding residents and communities.
				Potential positive impact: The project may add to the health and wellbeing of residents in the study area through investments in community infrastructure, the potential for downward pressure to be placed on the market regarding energy prices, as well as greater telecommunication security through expansion of the supply-side infrastructure.
	Health – skills development and training	Sensitive	A rating of sensitive was determined based on the consultation that indicates this value contributes to the livelihood and health of people in the study area.	**Potential positive impact:** Employment opportunities for females, youth, First Peoples, and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce are available. Consultation identified opportunities for youth, First Peoples and socially vulnerable people to gain new skills.

9. SOCIAL IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This section provides a complete summary of the social impacts associated with the project. The broad conceptualisation of social impacts used here is consistent with the International Association for Impact Assessment's current guidance on project-level impact assessment. This guidance provides an important insight into the scope of social impacts (Vanclay, Esteves and Franks 2015, p.2):

> *Because 'social impact' is conceived as being anything linked to a project that affects or concerns any impacted stakeholder group, almost anything can potentially be a social impact so long as it is valued by or important to a specific group of people. Environmental impacts, for example, can also be social impacts because people depend on the environment for their livelihoods and because people may have place attachment to the places where projects are being sited. Impacts on people's health and wellbeing are social impacts.*

Fundamentally, social impacts will be identified in other technical studies as dimensions of environmental or physical impacts. The section will summarise the social impacts identified in other technical reports that have been produced as part of the current environmental assessment process. These are:

- Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology
- Technical Appendix L: Air quality
- Technical Appendix T: Noise and vibration
- Technical Appendix R: Landscape and visual
- Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport
- Technical Appendix B: Economics
- Technical Appendix A: Electromagnetic fields
- Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use
- Technical Appendix K: Agriculture
- Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage
- Technical Appendix S: Land use and planning

No potential impact pathways were identified for social capital, community cohesion, or community safety. However, participants in the SIA consultation identified visual amenity, noise, access and use of natural and recreation areas, ecology, First Peoples cultural heritage and sense of place as potential project impacts. The following sections address the potential impact pathways identified for landscape amenity, access and use of natural and recreation areas, First Peoples values, cultural diversity and character, amenity, and sense of place.

The following sections will present the social impact and opportunity assessment under the following thematic headings:

- Community identity
- Economy and livelihood
- Infrastructure services
- People's productive capacity.

The environmental performance requirements for the social impact assessment are shown in section 9.7

It should also be noted that the SIA and the EIS/EES are precautionary in nature, as it uses a conservative approach or assumes that impacts will be experienced as a worst-case scenario. Where impacts or sensitivity may be classified between two levels, the higher or greater level of sensitivity or magnitude has been selected.

9.2 COMMUNITY IDENTITY

This section considers the project's potential to impact community identity in terms of social capital, community cohesion, cultural diversity, character, landscape and amenity, land use and natural resources, ecology and sense of place and community safety. The elements of community identity from the social wellbeing framework that were identified as being affected are landscape character and amenity. No potential impact pathways were identified for social capital, community cohesion or community safety.

9.2.1 Construction

Project activity and change

The project's construction activities will result in temporary changes to the environment, which have the potential to affect the amenity and character of the local study area. These changes are considered in the EIS/EES in separate studies and include changes to:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Air quality
- Landscape and visual amenity
- Natural values
- Access to recreational areas.

These are discussed separately and then jointly to assess the potential social impacts of changes to amenity and character.

This section considers the potential for amenity and character changes to affect primarily residential receivers and the users of natural and recreational areas. The potential for changes to affect Aboriginal cultural values are provided in Section 9.2.3.

Noise

The noise and vibration receivers for this assessment comprise houses and holiday accommodations such as motels and B&Bs. These are collectively referred to as receivers. Impacts can range from annoyance and minor disturbance to complete disruption of typical residential activities, which could cause sleep disturbance.

Environmental noise and vibration can also impact areas such as state forests and national parks where natural sounds are valued for nature appreciation activities such as wildlife viewing. This will mainly relate to the segment from Baromi to Driffield (the Strzelecki State Forest),

Construction activities involving large plant items and high noise emission activities near receivers will likely be audible above the background noise environment. The primary noise consideration for the project in its operation phase was associated with the converter station.

As noted in Technical Appendix T: Noise and vibration assessment, 312 receivers were identified within approximately 500 m of the project as this area is expected to experience the highest construction and operational noise levels. Construction noise may extend to areas beyond 500 m from the project and receivers beyond 500 m may need to be incorporated in the project's construction noise and vibration management plan.

The predicted noise levels at the receivers nearest to the shore crossing works are relatively low. It is anticipated that HDD and duct installation for the shore crossing of both circuits will take approximately eight to 12 months. Each HDD will be drilled continuously 24 hours per day, up to 7 days per week to ensure borehole stability. Ducts for both stages will be installed during stage 1 works to avoid two separate drilling campaigns. The predicted noise levels indicate that:

- A small number of receivers where construction of the shore crossing is likely to be audible inside a neighbouring dwelling at night.
- Environmental noise levels in natural areas adjacent to the shore crossing (Waratah Bay to Shallow Inlet Coastal Reserve) will be impacted and visitors are likely to have diminished nature appreciation experiences of the shore crossing while drilling works are occurring.
- Environmental noise levels at the Cape Liptrap Coastal Park are much lower, and the shore crossing works are not expected to diminish visitors' natural appreciation experiences.

If an approval is obtained for unavoidable works outside of normal working hours for the shore crossing, then dedicated noise mitigation and management measures will need to be developed and implemented to minimise the risk of harm to receivers.

Environmental noise predictions were not calculated for the Mirboo North natural and forest areas to identify if important species identified by the community in the SIA consultation were affected by noise. The important species to the community include burrowing crayfish, frogs in/near waterways, greater gliders, powerful owls, the Strzelecki koala and lace monitor. The ecology study indicates that noise and light pollution immediately adjacent to nesting and roosting habitats may adversely impact the natural behaviour of threatened species and reproductive cycles during construction. Given construction in any one location is not expected to last for longer than two weeks, these impacts are considered to be a low to moderate risk (EIS/EES Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology assessment). Potential noise associated with the additional light and heavy vehicle traffic on the public road network moving construction materials and equipment from the ports to proposed laydown areas was assessed. It was found to be higher than the assessment reference levels and priority management zones were not required. This is a very stringent benchmark for construction-related traffic, and the noise of existing traffic movements is also likely to be above the Environment Reference Standard level in many instances. Construction traffic movements represent an intermittent source and the projected total daily vehicle movements are relatively low, even at the stage of the project when the greatest volume of traffic is anticipated.

Vibration

Construction vibration associated with plant operation was also assessed in EIS/EES Technical Appendix T: Noise and Vibration. The technical study indicated that the minimum separation distances for construction activities addressed the majority of the risk of impacts to receivers. There are a number of receivers where there is a small risk and these impacts can be appropriately managed through appropriate plant selection, consultation with potentially affected receivers and vibration monitoring if/where required.

Air quality

The potential for air quality (dust) impacts on receivers was assessed in EIS/EES Technical Appendix L: Air quality assessment. The construction activities with the most potential for the generation of dust emissions include the following:

- Land clearing of the operational area and associated with the land cable and construction of the proposed converter station at Hazelwood or Driffield.
- Excavation and stockpiling of topsoil associated with developing the proposed converter station at Hazelwood or Driffield and land cable trenches.
- Horizontal directional drilling associated with the Waratah Bay shore crossing.

- Earthmoving and surface preparation are required to construct and upgrade roads and access tracks.

Dust emissions are predicted to also occur due to the earthmoving activities involved in preparing these areas, including:

- Materials handling associated with excavation and dozing.
- Wheel-generated dust from material transport.
- Wind erosion from stockpiled material and exposed ground.

The air quality technical study concluded that the project will have a low risk to human health and amenity with the mitigation measures adopted to comply with EPRs and mitigate impacts at the Hazelwood or Driffield converter station option will be negligible or negligible to low.

Landscape and visual amenity

The main disturbance to visual amenity during the construction phase will be temporary in nature and the extend of the impact will be dependent on the landscape and social context at each location. For example, visitors to a national park will be more sensitive to visual disturbances associated with industrial development while conversely will be less sensitive to the presence of industrial development in an industrial estate.

The landscape and visual assessment identified four areas along the route that has the potential to have a high visual impact during construction (albeit temporary) but, following remediation, will be low to negligible. These included the following viewpoints:

- Waratah Road
- GRRT
- Strzelecki Highway and Smiths Road intersection
- Tramway Road

The underground cable system will not be visible in the operations phase of the project.

The converter station, fibre optic terminal station and potentially the transition station (if required) will be the only above-ground components in operation.

Natural values

The AoD is a 20 to 36m wide corridor that has been sited to avoid vegetation and habitat impacts. SIA consultation found that the Mirboo North Forest in the Strzelecki ranges was highly valued by local residents and had recently been the subject of an assessment of its values in its identification as an Immediate Protection Area (IPA). The Mirboo North IPA is located to the north of the Mirboo North township and includes parts of the Strzelecki Darlimurla Block State Forest. The proposed AoD will traverse under the much-valued Mirboo North IPA, Little Morwell River, GRRT and Great Southern Rail Trail reserve.

The biodiversity and ecological values assessment for the Mirboo North IPA was undertaken by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (2022) and found that:

- It is a key site for the threatened species: southern greater glider, Narracan burrowing crayfish, South Gippsland burrowing crayfish and potentially South Gippsland spiny crayfish.
- The IPA is known or likely to contribute to the conservation of several other threatened species, including the powerful owl and lace monitor, as well as the genetically diverse Strzelecki koala population.
- If the protected area system in the Strzelecki Ranges bioregion is to meet nationally agreed comprehensiveness, adequacy and representation (CAR) targets, almost all of the IPA should be included.

The terrestrial ecology of the local and regional study area was also assessed (EIS/EES Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology) for the potential impacts of the project on native vegetation and threatened ecological

communities in Waratah Bay, Tarwin Valley, Strzelecki Ranges and Latrobe Valley. In addition to the species identified as important to the Mirboo North community, a range of threatened flora and fauna species were also identified. Within the survey area, 55 threatened fauna species and 37 threatened flora species that are present or likely to occur.

Impacts from construction can include:

- vegetation clearing
- fauna injury/mortality
- pest species incursion
- disturbances from dust, noise, vibration and light;
- erosion from the disturbed ground and subsequent sedimentation;
- changes in water quality due to erosion/sedimentation or change to hydrology where the cable crosses watercourses;
- contamination from spills and leaks of hazardous materials.

Access to recreational areas

The project's construction activities will result in temporary changes to the natural and scenic environment, which have the potential to affect the amenity and character of natural and recreational areas in proximity to the project.

The project will cross Bass Strait in a relatively straight line between Heybridge in North West Tasmania and Waratah Bay on Victoria's south coast. The proposed route crosses a part of Bass Strait, which is of low environmental sensitivity, with cables installed beneath the seabed at an estimated depth of between 1 m to 1.5 m. SIA consultation highlighted that the area is not a popular boating area so the impact to recreational and semi-commercial fishing is likely to be minor.

Table 9-1 below describes the temporary impacts on recreational users during the construction phase.

Table 9-1 Potential impacts to regional reserves and beaches – construction

Name	Distance from the project	Summary of landscape and visual changes	Potential noise and air quality changes	Potential social impact
Mirboo North IPA	0	Construction will be noticeable due to proximity to the project area	Noise and vibration from drilling and construction could reduce the nature-based recreation experience.	Restricted access to the IPA for recreation users and citizen scientists.
Great Southern Rail Trail	0 (within the easement)	Vegetation will be filtered.	Noise and vibration from drilling and construction could reduce the nature-based recreation experience.	Restricted access to the rail trail.
Waratah Bay beach	1.4 km	Construction activity (drilling) will be noticeable from the beaches.	Some receivers in the townships could experience noise and vibration from drilling and construction activities	Noise could impact the ability to experience the sounds of nature.

Name	Distance from the project	Summary of landscape and visual changes	Potential noise and air quality changes	Potential social impact
Grand Ridge Rail Trail	20 m	Vegetation will be filtered.	Noise and vibration from drilling and construction could reduce the nature-based recreation experience.	Restricted access to the rail trail.

Marine environment

Seabed disturbance impacts

The shore crossings of the project's individual HVDC and optical fibre cables will be undertaken using HDD. The nearshore zone is defined as the zone from the low tide level at 1 m depth to 2.5 km seaward where the water depth is 20 m.

There is a low diversity and abundance of benthic fishes, macroinvertebrates and infauna present in the seabed. Jet trenching cable installation and burial impacts are expected to mainly displace benthic fish and the more mobile benthic fauna such as bottom-living fishes and crabs.

Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use indicates that seabed disturbance impacts to water and sediment quality, seabed habitats and associated benthic biological communities are short-term and recoverable.

Underwater noise impacts

An underwater noise impact assessment was undertaken to assess underwater noise generated by marine construction activities (e.g., cable installation and burial using jet trencher) and the construction associated vessels (e.g., cable lay ship, tender vessels and offshore supply vessels). In this assessment, the loudest identified noise source was the cable lay ship maintaining location using its thrusters under dynamic positioning control.

Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use has identified that no mortality of noise-sensitive marine fauna is predicted. The assessment indicated that there is a potential for acoustic damage to high-frequency hearing cetaceans if they reside close to the cable laying vessel for an hour. Hearing damage is unlikely to occur under the one-hour cumulative exposure period, as cetaceans are unlikely to remain stationary or swim at a constant distance from the cable lay ship as it transits Bass Strait. Furthermore, free-ranging and highly mobile cetaceans will detect the underwater noise gradient surrounding project marine concentration vessels and, as such, are not expected to closely approach the construction vessels.

Artificial light disturbance

The cable lay vessel and the two guard vessels that will accompany cable lay operations will result in artificial light emissions during night-time works. Potential effects include injury or death to marine birds and invertebrates due to attraction to the light. Light emissions also have the potential to interrupt migration and roosting behaviour of marine birds. Artificial light impacts will be reduced by minimising lighting and light spill during construction.

Invasive marine species

There is a risk of introduction of invasive marine species from vessel ballast water or hull fouling. There are a range of well-established management measures to be implemented and the limited number of international ships (i.e., a cable laying vessel) that will be involved in the project in the context of a much larger number of international vessels using Bass Strait waters.

Potential impact

The SIA consultation found that residents highly value the existing amenity and the natural environment which underpins the rural and coastal lifestyle of the region. The construction activities may affect the amenity and character for some residents. These activities may also temporarily impair resident's enjoyment of their properties and activities that are undertaken within it and for some, may be experienced as disruptive or annoying.

Table 9-2 details the pre-mitigated assessment and provides justification for each magnitude rating.

Table 9-2 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on landscape and amenity, land use and natural resources and ecology (construction)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community identity						
Construction	**Negative**: Noise, vibration and visual disturbances causing amenity impacts.	Landscape and amenity	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	The moderate magnitude rating has been provided as the amenity impacts during construction will likely result in a noticeable change from baseline conditions in the study area. Noise, vibration and visual amenity changes may temporarily impact residents' enjoyment of their properties and activity undertaken within them. Construction activities are expected to be undertaken 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week and in some locations, will impact people's enjoyment of recreational values, particularly in natural areas adjacent to the shore crossing (Waratah Bay to Shallow Inlet Coastal Reserve). The proportion of people affected will be notable and works are expected to occur for up to 12 months at the shore crossing.
Construction	**Negative**: Amenity impacts for nearby residents due to dust from construction activities.	Landscape and amenity	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	
Construction	**Negative**: The project's construction activities may result in temporary access changes to regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas, beaches that are used by the community and are highly valued.	Land use and natural resources	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	
Construction	**Negative**: The project's construction could impact on fauna and flora through injury or fatality through vehicle strikes and disturbance of habitat through vegetation clearing.	Ecology	Very sensitive	Major	Major	The project survey area and surrounding landscape identified 27 threatened flora species and 33 threatened fauna species. Any impacts, direct or indirect, to threatened species will be of major significance to people within the study area.

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Construction	**Negative:** Impacts on the marine environment from construction activities offshore and nearshore.	Community identity: Ecology	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	All seabed disturbance impacts to water quality and sediment disturbance, seabed habitats and associated benthic biological communities are short-term and recoverable. Vessel collision, artificial light disturbance, introduction of invasive marine species are all considered low or very low impact by the technical assessment. High frequency cetaceans may be impacted by underwater noise during construction. While it is considered unlikely for cetaceans to remain in the vicinity of the cable laying ship for an extended period of time a conversative approach has been applied and therefore a magnitude of moderate. It is more likely that cetaceans will flee in which case the magnitude is low.

Environmental performance requirements

EPRs have been recommended in the EIS/EES Technical Appendix T: Noise and vibration, EIS/EES Technical Appendix L: Air quality, EIS/EES Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology and EIS/EES Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use, to reduce the potential noise, ecological impacts on residents and other receivers, so far as reasonably practicable.

MLPL and its contractors will also implement a project-specific community and stakeholder engagement framework for the project, which will:

- Continue the existing engagement with landholders and nearby residents during the project's detailed design phase to inform them of the project's design, identify impacts (if any) and determine potential mitigation and management approaches. Individual meetings will be held with landholders.
- Inform landholders and nearby residents of the forward works program.
- The forward works program to enable adequate planning around the use of these areas when their amenity may be affected by the project's activities.
- Establish a project-wide complaints process and share this with landholders, residents and other stakeholders.

As required by EPR S03, a community and stakeholder engagement framework for each stage of the project will build rapport with the community, assist in understanding concerns and opportunities, mitigate issues and maximise local benefits.

Such implemented EPRs are to address applicable guidance and, if applicable, the general environmental duty under the *Environment Protection Act 2017* (Vic).

The full EPRs recommended for social impacts are provided in section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S03	**Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework** Prior to commencement of project works, develop a community and stakeholder engagement framework to outline the approach to engagement with community, stakeholders and First Peoples will be undertaken for project and by all contractors.	**Design, Construction Operation**
	Air quality	
AQ01	**Develop and implement a construction dust management plan**	**Construction**
	Noise and vibration	
NV01	**Conduct additional background noise monitoring**	**Construction**
NV02	**Develop and implement a construction noise and vibration management plan**	**Construction**
	Landscape and visual amenity	
LV01	**Design converter station buildings to minimise visual impacts from public locations**	**Design, Construction**
LV2	**Implement measures to establish and maintain a vegetative screen for public views of above ground components**	**Design, Construction**
LV3	**Design transitions station to minimise visual impacts from public locations**	**Design, Construction**
	Terrestrial Ecology	
EC01	**Avoid or minimise native vegetation and habitat loss and degradation**	**Construction**
EC02	**Develop and implement a biodiversity management plan**	**Construction**
EC03	**Implement aquatic habitat protection measures**	**Construction**
	Marine ecology and resource use	
MERU06	**Develop and implement a marine communication plan**	**Construction**
MERU07	**Develop and implement a marine fauna management plan**	**Construction Operation**
MERU08	**Develop and implement a cetacean interaction management plan**	**Construction Operation**

Residual impact

Following the implementation of measures to comply with the EPRs, it is anticipated that the changes in amenity values from general construction activities and visual impacts will reduce in magnitude. It is recognised that some residents will perceive the magnitude of changes as more negative and intrusive than by less directly affected residents in the local area, regardless of mitigation and management. With the implementation of mitigations, the project's magnitude was reduced to **minor** resulting in a residual impact of **moderate**.

The implementation of EPRs that utilise the dust management and mitigation measures from the IAQM, EPA Victoria guidance documents will ensure activities have minimal impact on sensitive receptors as a result of the EPRs the residual impact is **low**.

In relation to access to recreational areas, it is anticipated that the changes in amenity and character will be reduced to the extent that people's use of the regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches will

generally be maintained, although there will still be temporary changes in amenity. However, it is recognised that some users of these areas may be particularly sensitive. This may reduce the use of these areas for short periods. With the implementation of EPRs, the magnitude can be reduced to a minor and the residual impact of the project on regional reserves, marine areas and beaches is **moderate** (based on **very sensitive value** and **minor magnitude of impact**).

Through the implementation of EPRs the impacts on threatened species can be minimised or avoided. The magnitude rating for flora and fauna impacts after the implementation of mitigation measures has been reduced to a **minor** magnitude and an overall impact rating of **moderate**.

Dedicated marine fauna management plans will be developed to avoid and minimise impacts in the marine environment, including a specific management plan to for cetaceans. There will be controls put in place to manage potential water quality impacts, minimise light emissions, and prevent the introduction of invasive species. Low impact construction methods will also be adopted to minimise impacts on the marine environment. With the implementation of these types of measures to comply with EPRs, the magnitude would reduce to **minor** and the overall residual social impact would be **moderate**.

The residual impact of the project on character and amenity are assessed in Table 9-18.

9.2.2 Operation

Project activity and change

Minor maintenance activities will occur over the project's lifetime to access the underground cable, converter station and possibly transition station. This may result in temporary changes for people in the study area, but due to their infrequency and duration, the operational activities are likely to have only minor impacts on amenity and character.

Some users of the areas may be particularly sensitive to the short-term reduction in the use of the regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches, which may affect their sense of place. The visual impact of the project's construction activities will be evident in the absence of remediation works.

Landscape and visual amenity

Visual amenity was described in the SIA consultation as 'very important to people and they are concerned about the loss of visual amenity created by renewable energy and infrastructure developments. The areas identified as highly valued landscapes were agricultural areas, conservation reserves and natural bushlands, the marine area and beaches. The assessment of potential landscape and visual impacts from the project were assessed for impacts on the views within the public domain (not from residential dwellings) in EIS/EES Technical Appendix R: Landscape and Visual assessment (Landform Architects 2023).

The underground cable system will not be visible in the operations phase of the project. The converter station, fibre optic terminal station and potentially the transition station (if required) will be the only above-ground components in operation.

The majority of the land in the study area and project alignment is land within the Farming Zone. It is recognised that many people find these areas appealing for their apparent natural values. At a distance of approximately 400 m the Hazelwood Converter Station will be a noticeable element in the view, however, views will be confined to large sheds, similar in scale to others found elsewhere in surrounding farming land. The Driffield Converter Station will be visible, features and buildings associated with the converter station will be low in level.

Potential impact

The way in which amenity and character contribute to people's sense of place and their enjoyment will be temporarily disrupted but, over time, will be restored.

There may be some users of the areas that are particularly sensitive to the short-term reduction in the use of the regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches, which may affect their sense of place. The visual impact of the project's construction activities will be evident in the absence of remediation works.

Some residents and landholders will experience a permanent reduction in their sense of place and enjoyment of their properties. The project has been located within a predominantly disturbed landscape that has been cleared of native vegetation for forestry and agriculture.

However, impacts on ecological values in the area can be through:

- Permanent access tracks through vegetation where a landowner has elected to retain the access track.
- Fauna injury/mortality due to vehicle strikes when undertaking maintenance inspections.
- Weed and pest incursions.
- Dust emissions and fire ignition risks from vehicles.
- Fragmentation of habitat that impacts connectivity as a result of permanent vegetation removal.
- Disturbance to flora and fauna through lighting.

Table 9-3 details the pre-mitigated impacts on the social value and provides justification for each magnitude rating.

Table 9-3 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on character, amenity and sense of place (operation)

Project phase	Potential impact (negative or positive)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community identity						
Operation	**Negative**: Amenity impacts from operation activities, such as noise and vibration impacts.	Character, amenity, and sense of place.	Very Sensitive	Minor	Moderate	Minor maintenance activities will occur over the project's lifetime to access the underground cable, converter station and possibly transition station. This may result in temporary changes for people in the study area; however, due to their infrequency and duration, the operational activities are likely to have only minor impacts on amenity and character.
Operations	**Negative**: Views of the converter stations from public locations may impact on a community's sense of place	Community identity: Landscape and amenity	Very Sensitive	Minor	Moderate	The majority of the land in the study area and project alignment is land within the Farming Zone. It is recognised that many people find these areas appealing for their apparent natural values.

Project phase	Potential impact (negative or positive)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
						At a distance of approximately 400 m the Hazelwood converter station will be a noticeable element in the view, however, views will be confined to large sheds, similar in scale to others found elsewhere in surrounding farming land. The Driffield converter station will be visible, features and buildings associated with the converter station will be low in level.
Operation	**Negative**: The project's establishment may result in changes to amenity and character that reduce the use of valued regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches that have high community use and are highly valued.	Character, amenity, and sense of place.	Very Sensitive	Negligible	Low	Minor maintenance activities will occur over the project's lifetime to access the underground cable, converter station and possibly transition station. This is unlikely but may result in temporary changes to the access of recreational areas, but due to their infrequency and duration, the operational activities are likely to have only negligible impacts on amenity and character.
Operation	**Negative:** Ongoing impacts on flora and fauna in line with maintenance activities such as access tracks maintained through vegetation, injury from vehicle movements, weeds and pests, fragmentation of habitat and disturbance to fauna and flora through lighting.	Character, amenity, and sense of place.	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	Minor maintenance activities will occur over the lifetime of the project and adherence to EPRs will assist in further minimising the magnitude of the impact.

Environmental performance requirements

EPRs have been recommended in the EIS/EES Technical Appendix T: Noise and vibration, EIS/ESS Technical Appendix R: Landscape and visual, EIS/EES Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology and EIS/EES Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use, to reduce the potential noise, marine, visual and ecological operational impacts of the project.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S03	**Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework** Prior to commencement of project works, develop a community and stakeholder engagement framework to outline the approach to engagement with community, stakeholders and First Peoples will be undertaken for project and by all contractors.	**Design, Construction, Operations**
	Noise	
NV05	**Develop an operation noise management plan for the converter station and transition station sites**	**Operation**
	Operational environmental management	
EM03	**Operate the project in accordance with management plans**	**Operation**
	Landscape and visual amenity	
LV01	**Design converter station buildings to minimise visual impacts from public locations**	**Design, construction**
LV2	**Implement measures to establish and maintain a vegetative screen for public views of above ground components**	**Design, construction**
LV3	**Design transitions station to minimise visual impacts from public locations**	**Design, construction**
	Terrestrial Ecology	
EC01	**Avoid or minimise native vegetation and habitat loss and degradation**	**Design, construction**
EC02	**Develop and implement a biodiversity management plan**	**Design, construction**
EC03	**Implement aquatic habitat protection measures**	**Design, construction**

Residual impact

Following the implementation of mitigation and management measures to comply with EPRs, it is anticipated that the changes in amenity and character will be reduced to the extent that people's enjoyment of their properties and sense of place will generally be maintained. However, it is recognised that the changes will be perceived by some residents to be negative and intrusive regardless of mitigation and management.

The magnitude for operational activities has reduced to a **low** residual impact following the implementation of EPRs including an operation noise management plan reducing the magnitude to **negligible**.

It is also anticipated that the views to the project area will be of **negligible** magnitude following the implementation of EPRs. The impact on communities and residents will be reduced by directly avoiding areas where the primary purpose is stated as residential; maximising setbacks to areas within the Township and Rural Living Zones; minimising distances where the project will run parallel to major roads, highways, and tourist routes; and minimising the amount and type of vegetation required to be removed. Given this, the residual impact will be **low**.

During operations, it is anticipated that any impact to amenity and character that reduce the use of valued regional reserves, rail trail, marine areas and beaches will be temporary and infrequent. The residual impact of the project on valued regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches is **low**.

Through the implementation of the EPRs, impacts on threatened species can be minimised or avoided. Specific management measures will be determined by the contractors undertaking maintenance works, such as avoiding priority habitat for threatened fauna species and using HDD or alignment refinement to avoid locations threatened fauna. . The residual impact is **low** (based on a **very sensitive** value and **negligible magnitude** of impact).

Table 9-18 summarises the assessment of the project's potential residual impacts on community identity.

9.2.3 Aboriginal Cultural Values

During the SIA consultation, participants highlighted the importance of engaging and consulting First Peoples to identify cultural heritage values and measures to protect these values during the project's construction. This feedback aligns with the importance of the study area of the social value of community identity and the attribute of First Peoples values, cultural diversity and heritage.

First Peoples organisation representatives also underlined the importance of allowing adequate time for significant community members and Elders to properly assess and consider project information (including any potential impacts to cultural values) at all stages, through established and trusted communication channels.

Acknowledging the community and First Peoples representatives' feedback and EIS/EES Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage, Aboriginal cultural values are considered highly significant. As a result, Aboriginal cultural values against the social criterion were all rated as High (places or values which have a highly significant social connection for a cultural group at either the local and/or state and/or national level).

9.2.3.1 Construction

Project activity and change

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage sites identified within the cultural heritage study area (EIS/EES Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage) have the potential to be impacted by project-related activities as a result of:

- Direct disturbance of cultural heritage sites due to on-ground works, including vegetation clearance, topsoil stripping, subsoil excavation and construction.
- Direct disturbance of cultural heritage sites due to the movement of project employees and contractors and their vehicles (e.g., erosion, unauthorised removal of artefacts).
- Physical modifications to cultural landscapes that may result in damage to or destruction of some cultural values and their loss from living memory and, hence, from oral tradition.
- Disturbance to ecosystems through environmental impacts on landforms and soils, water resources and hydrology, and biodiversity, which have the potential to affect the immediate utility and long-term viability of cultural heritage places and other cultural heritage values that may be identified based on these extant systems.
- Restricted physical access of First Peoples and other communities to cultural heritage places due to project-related activities and operational requirements.

Potential impact

EIS/EES Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage identified a range of project activities with the potential to impact cultural heritage values during construction if no mitigation or management actions were implemented; these are described in Table 9-4 below.

Table 9-4 Cultural heritage value impact pathways – Construction

Activity	Actions potentially impacting cultural heritage values
Shore crossing	• Excavation of HDD entry and exit pits
Transition and Converter stations	• Vegetation removal • Ground surface levelling/benching • Hardstand/laydown preparation (soil stripping) • Foundation construction • Civil works/underground utility installations
Land cables	• Vegetation removal • Topsoil stripping and stockpiling • Site establishment • Haul road construction • Cable trench excavation, duct installation, backfilling • Excavation of HDD entry and exit pits
Access roads/tracks	• Vegetation removal • Topsoil stripping and stockpiling

Table 9-5 details the pre-mitigated impacts on the social value and provides justification for each magnitude rating.

Table 9-5 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on First Peoples values, cultural diversity and heritage (construction)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment		Justification for magnitude rating	
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community identity						
Construction	**Negative**: The project's establishment may result in the loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage values.	First Peoples values, Cultural diversity and heritage.	Very Sensitive	Major	Major	The major magnitude is a result of the potential for a considerable change from baseline conditions and the effect that could have on culture, including: • loss of connection between people and their places of cultural value through the destruction or damage of a place or landscape. • loss of information that could otherwise be gained by conducting research today. • loss of the archaeological resource for future research using methods and addressing questions not available today; and • permanent loss of the physical record.

Environmental performance requirements

EPRs have been recommended in EIS/EES Technical Appendix J: Aboriginal and historical cultural heritage, to reduce the potential impact on cultural heritage values and places from project activities with First Peoples; these are detailed in the table below.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
CH02	Comply with the Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) 18201 and 18244.	Construction, operation
EM08	Develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples	All stages of the project

Residual impact

Following the implementation of mitigation measures to comply with the EPRs outlined above, it is anticipated that cultural heritage values will be proactively identified and managed closely with First Peoples. The magnitude is reduced to **minor** following mitigation and the **residual impact** of the project's construction activities on Aboriginal cultural heritage values will be **moderate**.

The residual impact of the project on Aboriginal cultural heritage is assessed in Table 9-18.

9.2.3.2 Operation

Project activities in the operational phase that result in vegetation removal and disturbance of ground surfaces and/or subsurface deposits may also impact heritage values.

Project activity and change

Land cables are expected to be relatively low maintenance cultural, with routine maintenance limited to smaller activities around the cable joint pits. Routine maintenance activities include inspections of the land cable easement to identify or manage rehabilitation issues, land stability and weed infestations.

Potential impact

If routine maintenance necessitates ground disturbance in and around the 20 m cable easement, there is a low likelihood of cultural heritage values being impacted as a wider area of up to 36 m will be disturbed during construction.

Table 9-6 details the pre-mitigated impacts on the social value and provides justification for each magnitude rating.

Table 9-6 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on the social value

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community identity						
Operation	**Negative**: Project activities in the operational phase that result in vegetation removal and disturbance of ground surfaces and/or subsurface deposits may also create potential impacts on cultural heritage values.	First Peoples values, Cultural diversity and heritage.	Very sensitive	Severe	Major	The severe magnitude is a result of the potential for a fundamental change from existing conditions and the effect that will have on culture. Also, it will be a permanent change and impact on a noticeable population group, given its high social value.

Environmental performance requirements

The preparation a CHMP (EPR CH02), alongside the implementation of appropriate management conditions and contingency responses to the discovery of new historical or Aboriginal cultural heritage during the operation of the project, will manage impacts and ensure that if impacts do occur, they will be minimised.

MLPL will develop and implement its a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples (EPR EM08) for the project. The plan includes the following:

- Details on engaging with First Peoples across a range of forums, including the Aboriginal Advisory Group.
- A commitment to explore opportunities with First Peoples across employment, procurement, environmental protection, offsets and rehabilitation and cultural heritage.
- A commitment for an industry participation plan to be developed in consultation with First Peoples.

EPR S05 has been recommended to require ongoing close engagement with First Peoples to help mitigate any potential impact on cultural values. This also reflects the work currently being progressed by MLPL in terms of ongoing Aboriginal engagement. The full EPRs are provided in section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy.	**Design, Construction, Operation**
CH02	**Comply with the Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) 18201 and 18244.**	**Construction, Operation**

Residual impact

There remains a potential for residual impacts on unknown cultural heritage values. However, the potential for these to occur should be minimal if impacts arising during the operation of the project are confined to the construction impact footprint. Following the implementation of mitigation measures to comply with EPRs, it is anticipated no further loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage should occur. The magnitude reduces following

mitigation and the residual impact of the project on Aboriginal cultural heritage values will be **moderate (very sensitive and minor magnitude).**

The potential impacts on Aboriginal cultural heritage values are assessed in Table 9-18

9.3 ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOODS

This section considers the potential for the project to affect characteristics of the socioeconomic environment that support affordable lifestyles. Specifically, this section examines employment, local businesses, workforce availability, and housing affordability and availability.

9.3.1 Employment opportunities, skills development and industry

9.3.1.1 Construction

Project activity and change

Employment will be associated with a range of construction activities for the construction of the project for onshore and offshore components, and rehabilitation of areas used to support construction.

Local employment associated with the project will be predominantly through contractors. In addition to this, the project construction will require a range of goods and services.

Approximately 50% of the project's construction workforce is expected to be local workers from the South Gippsland region, predominantly employed through local and regional businesses. Therefore, much of the employment associated with the project will be of people who are already employed in existing businesses. The remainder of the project's employment (50%) will be associated with skilled workers from specialist firms (e.g., directional drilling typically undertaken by specialist firms). These are likely to be sourced from outside of the regional study area, including Victoria as a whole, Australia and some from overseas for specialist skills such as marine cable laying.

Potential impact

Employment

Employment impacts from the project will represent a benefit to the region. However, during the consultation undertaken for this SIA and community engagement undertaken for the broader EIS/EES, a wide range of stakeholders raised local employment as a key benefit of the project. Some stakeholders expressed concerns that the use of non-resident employment will result in a lost benefit for the local and regional community.

Although there is an existing construction sector in the regional study area that is likely to have the skills to participate in contracting opportunities, the Victorian Skills Authority (2022) maintains that the construction industry is facing widespread workforce shortages, particularly in regional Victoria. The *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023 – 2033* assessed Victoria's clean economy skill needs, the training system's capacity and capability and current training courses. An estimated 10,000 additional jobs per year from now until 2030 are projected to support the renewable energy transition. Partnerships across industry, unions and the training sectors are required to support a supply of skilled workers in the right locations. Given the ongoing low rates of workforce participation in both Latrobe City and South Gippsland LGAs and the tight regional labour market conditions, finding the required skill set for the project within the local labour market will be challenging in the short term.

However, it is noted that any skill development associated with the project's employment will be an indirect impact (i.e., not undertaken by the project) and largely associated with cumulative demand for employees in the construction sector. Consequently, the construction of the project may contribute to the demand for the

construction sector that may require formalised workforce training and development in the local and regional study area and for the state and national workforce.

As described in Section 7.5.5, it is anticipated that the construction workforce will be comprised of 50% local workers from the South Gippsland region. The remaining 50% of the workforce will be sourced from other locations in Victoria, Australia and some from overseas for specialised skills.

EIS/EES Technical Appendix B: Economics highlights a key anticipated benefit of the project will be the diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities offering skills training opportunities for residents across the region across a range of skill levels and occupations, such as labourers to engineers. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food services.

Industry and business

In addition to direct procurement by the project, some local and regional businesses will benefit from expenditure by the project's workforce. This expenditure will primarily be on local goods and services providers (e.g., grocery stores, food, and restaurant outlets) and, in particular, local accommodation providers. SIA consultation with First Peoples organisation representatives identified the potential for the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples businesses to provide services which support activities and workforces on the ground as the project progresses, in sectors such as management and hospitality.

As detailed in the economics assessment (EIS/EES Technical Appendix B: Economics), the majority of the non-resident component of the construction workforce will be likely to seek accommodation for short periods in major townships across the regional study area. Details of the construction and operational workforce are outlined in Section 7.5.6. Participants in the SIA consultation indicated that the use of the short-term accommodation will be well-suited to hosting the non-resident workforce, particularly during the low season (i.e., winter). The project's potential impacts on the accommodation providers are likely to be short term and affect a small number of people or businesses. However, the use of short-term accommodation may impact on the tourism industry with less accommodation available and this will have a flow on effect to the tourism operations and local businesses such as restaurants and food services.

The economic assessment project that during the construction phase of the project (2025-2029) will contribute an estimated $642 million to the economy. At the state level, $1.4 billion into the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland. The construction phase also includes the first half year of operations as the project comes online in the second half of 2029. The operational phase (inclusive of half of 2029 through 2050 in the modelling) contributes a cumulative $361 million to the Gippsland economy (through 2050). At a state level, the operational phase adds $981 million to the Victorian economy (inclusive of Gippsland).

Furthermore, the project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.

The impact on the fisheries industry during construction is expected to be minor with the findings of the SETFIA report (EIS/EES Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource us) indicating that the project will have a low impact on fisheries in the Bass Strait. The report indicates that fishing activities are concentrated at the western and eastern ends of Bass Strait around King and Flinders islands, and near the Tasmanian and Victorian coastlines. Fishing activities are less intensive mid-strait due to the deeper water and absence of habitat features.

EIS/EES Technical Appendix H: Marine ecology and resource use identified that in terms of impacts navigation and marine traffic, temporary exclusions zones will be required around the cable lay vessel during cable lay operations and around the offshore support vessel during cable installation and burial operations. In general, ships' navigators and the skippers of smaller vessels will adjust their planned routes to deviate around the project's construction vessels that will have restricted movement. The location, timing and duration

of the temporary exclusion zones will be presented as ‘Notices to Mariners’, which alerts other maritime users of the restricted manoeuvrability of project vessels undertaking marine construction or decommissioning activities.

At the completion of construction, MLPL will inform the Australian Hydrographic Office (AHO) of the locations and coordinates of the project cables. This will enable the AHO to publish Notices to Mariners to inform maritime users of the presence of seabed power cables and mark them on navigation charts. It is anticipated that the project will not require exclusion zones over the project’s subsea cables during operations as they will have been buried to a nominal depth of 1 m or more for protection against anchor and trawling gear hook-ups.

Table 9-7 details the pre-mitigated impacts and provides justification for each magnitude rating.

Table 9-7 Pre-mitigated impact assessment: Employment and workforce and industry and business (construction)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Economy and livelihoods						
Construction	**Positive**: The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce within the local and regional study area.	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	The magnitude has been defined as minor as it will result in a small but measurable change from the baseline condition and will affect a small section of the community.
Construction	**Positive:** The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce from the state and national workforce.	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	The magnitude has been defined as negligible as, from a broader state and national perspective, the impact will be a marginal change and affects a small proportion of the population.
Construction	**Positive:** The project may contribute to a diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities and skills training opportunities for residents across a range of skill levels. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	The magnitude has been defined as negligible as, from a broader state and national perspective, the impact will be a marginal change and affects a small proportion of the population.
Construction	**Positive:** The project's construction will support local businesses through the goods and services required to support the project's development.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	Local and regional businesses will benefit from expenditure by the project's workforce. This expenditure will primarily be on local goods and services providers (e.g., grocery stores, food, and restaurant outlets) and, in particular, local accommodation providers. The impact will be small but measurable and will affect a small proportion of the community (business owners).
Construction	**Negative:** During the project's construction access to areas within Bass Strait will be	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	The rating is based on consultation feedback that highlights the growing concern commercial operators are having around restrictions with the rollout of energy and other major projects in key

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
	restricted which may impact on commercial fishing and shipping operations.					waterways. However, it is noted that the project construction will be temporary, and the section of the Bass Strait is not a significance fishing area.
Construction	**Positive:** The project's construction may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples businesses to provide services which support activities and workforces on the ground as work progresses.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	This rating is based on the marginal change from baseline conditions, due to the small number of individuals affected and duration of the potential impact.
Construction	**Positive:** The project's construction may contribute to existing and predicted demand for the construction sector, which may require formalised workforce training and development in the local and regional study area.	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	Demand for labour for the construction sector may require the training and development of the local and regional workforce, which will create a minor magnitude positive impact given the small section of the community that will be affected.
Construction	**Negative**: Potential for tourism accommodation to be constrained due to the construction workforce using short-term accommodation providers. This may result in lower tourists visiting the region impacting on revenue for regional tourism operators and local businesses such as retail and food services.	Industry and business	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	A range of accommodation measures will be considered for the construction workforce and the impact will have a moderate magnitude based on the duration of the potential impact, range of businesses potentially impacts and the impact on livelihoods. Noting the construction workforce spending will offset some of the potential impact.
Construction	**Positive:** A majority of the project's non-resident workforce will utilise short-term accommodation providers in the regional study area.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	Given the limited availability of rental housing in the study area, it is likely that the interstate and intrastate workforce will utilise short term accommodation in the region which will be of benefit to accommodation providers in the study area. A magnitude of moderate is based on it being a noticeable change to the baseline and occurring for a period of up to one year.

Environmental performance requirements

The employment associated with the project will be undertaken by contractors rather than by MLPL directly. However, MLPL will encourage local employment and training through the evaluation of the primary contractor's approach to local employment during the tendering phase. Additionally, MLPL will:

- Engage with the Victorian Fisheries Authority and marine stakeholders.
- Participate in workforce development initiatives.
- Procure goods and services in accordance with thek industry participation plan to support local businesses (including compliance by suppliers and contractors).
- Encourage local employment and training through their tenders and contracts to seek increased workforce participation of socially vulnerable populations, including but not limited to First Peoples, females and youth.
- Develop a Community Benefits Sharing Scheme that considers how a project can add value in a local area and what it takes to become a welcomed development in the community.

The employment benefits of the project will be enhanced through MLPL's community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S05). Detail on the EPRs is provided in section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S04	**Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop a community benefits sharing scheme in consultation with communities and First Peoples in the local study area. The community benefits sharing scheme should be developed having regard to Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers (July 2021).	**Design, Construction, Operation**
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy.	**Design, Construction, Operation**
	Marine ecology and resource use	
MERU06	**Develop and implement a marine communication plan**	**Construction**

Residual impacts

The residual impact of the project's potential benefits for skills development and local procurement during construction is assessed in Table 9-18. The residual magnitude and impact of the identified benefits in this section considers the implementation of measures to comply with the EPR S02. The measures to enhance regional benefits include:

- Existing measures in place to support the short-term employment of the workforce from the local and regional study area will have a **low** positive impact .

- Existing measures in place to support the short-term employment of 50% of the project's construction workforce from the state, national and international workforce will have a **very low** positive impact.
- The project may contribute to a diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities and skills training opportunities for residents across a range of skill levels. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food. The project's industry participation plan will help drive these enhancements. The impact is **low.**
- The residual impact for impacts to commercial fishing and shipping operations remains as **moderate** based on the concern commercial operators are having around restrictions with the rollout of energy and other major projects in key waterways. However, it is noted that the project construction will be temporary, and the section of the Bass Strait is not a significant fishing area. While the impact on shipping is consider to be **low**.
- Application of the project's industry participation plan for all its own corporate purchases and through the contracts and tenders it manages will create a positive impact alongside the spending of the construction workforce, resulting in a **moderate** impact**.**
- Demand for labour for the construction sector may require the training and development of the local and regional workforce, which will create a positive **moderate** impact.
- Non-residential and short-term construction workforce will seek accommodation from local and regional accommodation providers, which will create a positive **moderate** impact.
- Impact on the supply of tourist accommodation and flow on affects to the tourism operators and local businesses is anticipated to have a negative **moderate** impact.

9.3.1.2 Operation

Project activity and change

Operation activities for the project will be relatively minor, primarily related to monitoring, inspection, land clearing, vegetation management, track management, maintenance and repair.

Potential impact

Long term provision of jobs in the regional study area will support the regional economy and the region's social wellbeing. The flow-on social benefits associated with increased employment in the region include increased household wealth, increased individual health and wellbeing, and broader community wellbeing (Goldsmith, Veum, and Darity 1996; Nichols, Mitchell, and Lindner 2013; Raphael and Winter-Ebmer 2001).

The benefits of the project on workforce employment and skills development during operations will be positive and very low (based on low sensitivity and negligible magnitude of impact).

Table 9-8 Pre-mitigated impact assessment: Employment and workforce and industry and business (operation)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Economy and livelihoods						
Operation	**Positive:** The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.	Economy and livelihood	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	Economic prosperity is of significance to the study area and the contribution of revenue over a significance duration to national, state and local governments will result in a magnitude rating of moderate.
Operation	**Positive**: The project's operation is expected to support the employment of three direct employees within the local and regional study area.	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	A magnitude of negligible has been attributed, given the very marginal change from the baseline and the small number of individuals affected.

Environmental performance requirements

As part of the Community Benefits Sharing Scheme, MLPL will create an industry participation plan to enhance the range of opportunities for the region. The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S04	**Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop a community benefits sharing scheme in consultation with communities and First Peoples in the local study area. The community benefits sharing scheme should be developed having regard to Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers (July 2021).	**Design, Construction, Operation**

Residual impact

The residual impact of the project on workforce employment and skills development will be the same as the pre-mitigation impact and is **very low** (based on low sensitivity value and negligible magnitude of impact).

The project's potential impacts on workforce employment and skills development during operations are assessed in Table 9-18.

9.3.2 Workforce availability

9.3.2.1 Construction

Project activity and change

During the SIA consultation, a number of stakeholders raised concerns that there is an existing shortage of workers in the construction industry, which has flow-on impacts on residential construction/renovation and some council works, and that this may be exacerbated by the project. It is not anticipated that the project will compete directly with agricultural workers during construction, however any impacts will be monitored through the LIPP and SIMP.

As detailed in Section 7.5.5, the Victorian Government prepared the *Clean Economy Workforce Development Strategy 2023 – 2033* to inform government planning and investment in the skills and training to achieve Victoria's net-zero emissions target. This initiative will be the primary pathway for workforce training opportunities for local and regional workers that may be associated with the direct and indirect employment generated by the project.

Potential impact

The potential for the project's construction phase to affect workforce availability is expected to be moderate and medium term. An assessment is detailed below in **Table 9-9.**

Table 9-9 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on employment and workforce – availability (construction)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Construction	**Negative:** The project's construction may contribute to the demand for construction workers and attract employees away from local businesses. This may reduce the availability of these workers for other industries, and result in increased lead times or workforce shortages for local businesses.	Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	The are a number of developments planned in the region, with at least four of these projects requiring more than 500 construction workers (some are up to 2100). However, the unemployment rate in the region has remained above Victoria's unemployment rate for the past 10 years. This has been attributed to industry structural reforms and the redundancies that followed. The proposed developments will provide a range of direct and indirect employment opportunities, which should increase participation in the workforce.

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
						A moderate magnitude has been provided based on the noticeable change in the region from the baseline conditions, due to the high demand for construction workers to deliver projects.

Environmental performance requirements

A range of training initiatives have been identified (see Section 7.3.1) to prepare and develop the local and regional workforce with the skills to enter into renewable energy and related sectors. The industry participation plan will aid in mitigating this impact. The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy.	**Design, Construction, Operation**

Residual impact

The project's potential impacts on workforce availability during construction and assessed in Table 9-18. The residual impact is not expected to be materially different from the pre-mitigated impact. This is because the magnitude of the impact will be similar despite the implementation of mitigation measures to comply with EPRs. In part, this recognises that there are existing measures in place within the social environment designed to increase local capacity within the construction sector in response to the cumulative demand from the project and other renewable energy projects.

With respect to the impact on availability of the workforce for local businesses this will be monitored through the social impact management plan; however, the impact is not expected

Therefore, the residual impact of the project on workforce availability remains **moderate**.

9.3.2.2 Operation

Given that the operational phase employment is expected to be minimal, the project workforce will not result in workforce draw or affect workforce availability. Therefore, this has not been considered further.

9.3.3 Availability and affordability of housing

9.3.3.1 Construction

Project activity and change

It is expected that the non-residential workforce will require short-term and/or rental accommodation within proximity to the worksites to reduce fatigue limits on travel for the construction workforce. However, as noted in Section 7.3.4, rental availability is highly constrained in most urban centres. This has impacted the affordability of rental accommodation in the region for vulnerable populations on low or fixed incomes.

Potential impact

As outlined in Section 7.3.4, the availability and affordability of rental housing in the regional study area are highly constrained. Housing affordability is a community concern and has the highest effect on vulnerable groups, such as those on a limited or fixed income; it is considered a **sensitive** value.

Given the limited availability of affordable rental accommodation in the regional study area, the project's non-residential workforce will compete for the limited accommodation available and therefore affect the availability and affordability of housing. This will affect people on very low and low incomes in the regional study area to a greater extent than those on moderate and higher incomes.

However, there is potential that housing could be sourced from outside of this region or that there will be an increased uptake of short-term accommodation, given the limited availability of housing. This is highly dependent on the availability of short-term accommodation associated with the tourism sector at the time of construction.

In summary, while it is expected that the majority of the non-resident workforce will reside in the larger centres, there is the potential that they may exacerbate the existing high demand for rental housing in the regional study area and could potentially displace financially vulnerable populations. Consequently, the pre-mitigated impact of this project on the accessibility and affordability of rental housing is considered to be **high**.

Table 9-10 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on housing affordability and availability

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Construction	**Negative:** The project's workforce may contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, which will disproportionally affect very low- and low-income households.	Housing affordability and availability	Very Sensitive	Major	Major	Given the tight supply of rental housing (less than 2%) in the study area, the magnitude has been determined as major as it will result in a considerable change from existing conditions and could have a significant impact on the livelihoods and mental health of people within the study area. Vulnerable groups are likely to be most impacted, and this could be for a period of up to 12 months.

Environmental performance requirements

The relevant EPR involves developing and implementing a social impact management plan (EPR S01) and to provide a comprehensive workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02) to address both the demand from the project construction workforce and the cumulative impact of other large-scale construction and infrastructure projects in the region. The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S02	**Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy** Develop a workforce and accommodation strategy to address the potential social impact from the project's workforce and accommodation requirements during construction.	**Design, Construction**

Residual impact

The project's potential impacts on housing affordability and availability during construction and assessed in Table 9-18. It is expected that the residual impact can be somewhat mitigated through the implementation of the SIMP (EPR S01). As part of the SIMP, a comprehensive workforce and accommodation strategy and plan will be developed to address the housing demand from the project's construction workforce and the cumulative impact of other large-scale construction and infrastructure projects in the region. This will help mitigate the magnitude of the impact. Through the implementation of this plan, it is expected the magnitude will be **moderate** and therefore the residual impact will be **high**.

9.3.3.2 Operation

As detailed in Section 6.2, the operational activities for the project are limited to up to three personnel to undertake maintenance activities. Regardless of whether these personnel are drawn from the existing population or in-migrate, the population change will be negligible. Therefore, no impact on the availability and affordability of rental housing in the regional study area during the operation of the project has been identified or assessed.

9.3.4 Agriculture and forestry sector

As outlined in the baseline, more than half of the land uses that are directly affected by the project are mixed farming enterprises. Making agriculture and forestry a generator of employment and economic prosperity for a significant number of people in the study area.

9.3.4.1 Construction

Project activity and change

The project's construction activities will result in temporary restrictions on lands used for agricultural production. The duration of the restrictions depends on the types of crops grown, the time of the year that the construction activities take place relative to the land use (crop rotation, calving season etc.) and the volume of rehabilitation works required at the completion of the construction phase (such as water infrastructure and fencing).

Potential Impact

The social value potentially affected is economy and livelihood and this allows the affected community to make a living. Any activities that have the potential to disrupt agricultural activities during the construction phase have the potential to impact employment and reduce incomes. Any measures that restrict access to onsite infrastructure, such as irrigation systems and create biosecurity risks through the introduction of weeds and damage to natural resources, such as soil water quality, will impact on agricultural business operations.

Project construction activities will be high intensity but relatively short duration (weeks to months) at any one site. Multiple work crews will undertake specialist tasks in succession. When these tasks are being undertaken and work crews are on site, landholders will be intermittently excluded from accessing the construction area on their land. Some machinery and mobile infrastructure (such as irrigators) may not be permitted to operate in the project area during construction (EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry).

Project construction activities will involve the movement of machinery, workers, and materials on properties. Construction could require some removal of fencing or the installation of safety fencing. It may also restrict access to or the use of farm infrastructure, such as water pipes, troughs, and cattle yards. Some landholders will experience less disruption than others, depending on the location of the cable line and the intensity of production, and the location of infrastructure within and adjacent to the project area.

In summary, the impact of the project's construction activities without consideration of potential mitigation measures to comply with EPRs during construction is anticipated to result in the following:

- **Disruption to agricultural and forestry activities,** including restricted access to onsite infrastructure that will reduce productivity. For agricultural activities this may and necessitate the redesign of the farm layout, including water-related infrastructure, fencing, internal access routes and the use of built structures. Forestry operations are expected to be able to be maintained throughout construction and operation providing that access to forestry infrastructure and plantations is maintained for forestry operations; plantation rotations are considered; soils are appropriately reinstated so that plantation growth resumes to pre-construction levels; forestry infrastructure is reinstated and fire risk is managed by the construction contractor.
- **Reduced productivity or yields** from damage caused by construction activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography and vegetation. Lost or reduced production or yields through **breach of biosecurity** controls that lead to the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles. Biosecurity could also affect production and yield for the forestry industry through the introduction of plant infections.
- Impacts to the forestry industry with **reduced wood flows** from permanent clearing of tress or pre-mature harvesting.

A pre-mitigated assessment of the impacts has been provided in Table 9-11.

Table 9-11 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on industry and business, including agriculture and forestry (construction)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Economy and livelihoods						
Construction	**Negative:** Disruption to agriculture, and forestry activities, including restricted access to onsite infrastructure, will reduce productivity.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	Project construction activities will involve the movement of machinery, workers, and materials on properties. Construction could require some removal of fencing or the installation of safety fencing. It may also restrict access to or the use of farm infrastructure, such as water pipes, troughs, and cattle yards. Some landholders will experience less disruption than others, depending on the location of the cable line and the intensity of production, and the location of infrastructure within and adjacent to the project area.
Construction	**Negative:** Reduced productivity yields of the agriculture and forestry from damage caused by construction activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	The construction of temporary access tracks may impact soil properties via compaction through the constant use and weight of heavy machinery. Installation of access tracks for construction may also impact existing farm drainage. Construction may generate dust, noise, sedimentation, and erosion impacts on adjacent agricultural operations, which may impact the productivity and yield of agricultural produce by reducing ideal growing conditions. Leafy vegetables and fruit growth have the potential to be impacted by potential offsite dust discharges. The project may impact the water supply that supports agricultural land capability. This may be through the interruption to water reticulation infrastructure or accessibility for stock and irrigation, and availability of water in competition with construction demands.
Construction	**Negative:** Biosecurity risk to agriculture and forestry activities with the potential introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Major	Major	Construction and/or operational plant and vehicles, importation of construction material, moving up and down the alignment, has the potential to introduce external seed stock (weeds), plant and/or animal pathogens resulting in disease and ultimately reduced livestock carrying capacity and/or health of livestock and crop yield. It is important to ensure all land access during

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
	(and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.					construction and operations is subject to relevant on-farm biosecurity controls. It has been noted that certain farming practices have a higher level of risk, and these include horticulture, orchards and organic farming – the major magnitude aligns with the higher risk of these activities.
Construction	**Negative:** Impacts to the forestry industry with reduced woods flows from permeant clearing of tress or premature harvesting.	Industry and business	Very sensitive	Major	Major	The major magnitude reflects the need to permanently restrict plantation harvesting practices and accounts for where wood stock is permanently removed from forestry resources through clearing of trees for the project

Environmental performance requirements

The EPRs proposed to mitigate the impact on agricultural practices are detailed in EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry. The main environmental performance measures from this technical report are listed below and these will have the most applicability during the construction phase (EPRs A01, A02, A03, A04, A05, A06). In addition, impacts on the economy and livelihoods will be a key element of the social impact management lan (EPR S01). The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
	Agriculture	
A01	**Complete property condition surveys prior to construction**	**Design**
A02	**Develop and implement property management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties**	**Design, Construction**
A03	**Develop and implement property soil management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties**	**Construction,**
A04	**Develop and implement a rehabilitation strategy to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties**	**Construction**
A05	**Avoid impacts on organic farming certification**	**Construction**
A06	**Develop and implement measures to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties during operation**	**Operation**

Residual Impact

Following the implementation of the potential mitigation and management measures to comply with the EPRs, it is anticipated that:

- Disruption to agricultural activities, including restricted access to onsite infrastructure that will reduce the farm productivity and necessitate the redesign of the farm layout, including water-related infrastructure, fencing, internal access routes and the use of built structures. The residual impact of the project construction phase on the disruption to agricultural activities for landholders is **moderate** (based on a reduced **magnitude to minor**).
- Reduced productivity or yields of the agricultural enterprise from damage caused by construction activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation. The residual impact of the project from damage caused to the regions natural assets for agricultural productivity is **moderate** (based on a reduced **magnitude to minor**).
- Risk to biosecurity through the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles. The residual impact of the project from the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants to agricultural productivity is **low** (based on a reduced magnitude to **negligible**).
- The restrictions on plantation harvesting practices and permeant removal of wood stock will be mitigated through EPRs that lead to route refinement and final design reduce impacts on coupes, this will result in a **moderate** impact (minor magnitude).

9.3.4.2 Operation

Project activity and change

Operational activities will occur along the alignment and over the lifetime of the project, when required. The activities have the potential to introduce weeds, pest, plant and/or animal pathogens that can affect livestock carrying capacity and/or the health of livestock and crop yield. Biosecurity controls will be required during operation to ensure all land access during operations is subject to relevant on-farm or plantation biosecurity controls.

Agricultural and forestry operations may be affected by the interruption due to the access required for operation and maintenance activities, or the conditions that will apply to activities undertaken in the easement. After construction has been completed and the land has been reinstated, landowners will generally be able resume the same use as before construction. Minimal restrictions will apply to the 20 m easement (10 m either side of the cable) during operation, including no planting of deep-rooted trees and no construction of houses or dams.

Table 9-12 Pre-mitigated impact assessment agriculture and forestry industry (operations)

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Operation	**Negative:** Biosecurity risk to agriculture and forestry activities with the potential introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from operational and maintenance activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very Sensitive	Major	Major	Potential impacts related to site access include biosecurity breaches and general disturbance to landowners. However, routine maintenance is generally only required every five years at joint pits (where sections of cable are joined together underground) and involves two workers using hand tools and a 4WD vehicle. Routine inspections will be undertaken fortnightly from the road or permanent access tracks – no access to private properties is required.
Operation	**Negative:** Reduced economic and environmental viability of the agricultural or forestry enterprise from damage caused by changed agricultural operations due the easement, impacts to soil and water quality caused by incursions from project operation and maintenance activities.	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	There could be disruption of agricultural or forestry activities due to the access required for operation and maintenance. Impact on production during operation caused by need to modify or adopt alternative agricultural practices. Reduced farm income due to changes to operations and constraints on farm development plans during operation.

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
						The easement and land cables will constrain farm development plans reducing options and flexibility in configuring paddocks and siting farm infrastructure to support diversified or alternative farming practices.

Environmental performance requirements

A range of EPRs to manage the impacts on agricultural production are detailed in EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry. These address the livelihood concerns of the landowners and farmers directly affected by the construction and operation phases. These are listed above in the construction phase discussion.

Residual Impact

Based on the available information from Agriculture Victoria, there are no identified biosecurity-controlled parcels along the alignment. There were also no control properties identified from the site visits; however, there were a number of properties and landowners not visited as part of the agriculture assessment (EIS/EES Technical Appendix K). The report indicated that it is important that no pests, weeds, or diseases are introduced by construction activities and vehicles. It also identified the need to implement biosecurity protocols for each property specific to the agricultural activities being undertaken.

Based on the technical studies, SIA consultation and following the implementation of the potential mitigation and management measures to comply with EPRs, it is anticipated that:

- The residual impact of reduced productivity or yields to the agricultural enterprise from damage caused by operational activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation, is **low** based on sensitive value and negligible magnitude of impact.
- The residual impact from the risk to biosecurity through the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles is **low** (based on very sensitive value and **negligible magnitude** of impact).

Table 9-18 summarises the residual impacts of the operations phase on the agricultural sector.

9.4 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

9.4.1 Community health and emergency services

9.4.1.1 Construction

Project activity and change

As detailed in Section 6.1, the project's anticipated construction workforce may require up to 350 personnel at any one time. It is expected that around 50% of the workforce will be sourced locally within the Gippsland

region. The remainder of the workforce is expected to be sourced from other areas of Victoria and from outside of Victoria.

Potential impact

An increase in population has the potential to result in an increase in demand for health and emergency services. Where this demand is greater than the capacity of these services, service provision for the existing community may be compromised. This section considers the potential for this to occur at the GP level and at an emergency services/hospital level, with any emergencies likely directed to the Latrobe Regional Hospital located in Traralgon.

It is probable that the increased demand for GPs associated with the non-resident workforce who have already 'closed their books' will be directed towards the hospitals and health centres within the region, which will increase the demand for existing service provision. It is expected that demand from the non-resident workforce for health services will be directed towards regional centres.

Hospital services may be required in the event of an accident. Any increase in demand associated with potential accidents or other health services will be directed towards a regional service centre. Consequently, the increase in demand could affect regional service provision.

Should an accident occur, local emergency services (e.g., ambulance, police and fire services) will be required to respond. In some parts of the regional study area, there is limited emergency services infrastructure and personnel. This means that when an ambulance is occupied, it may be the only ambulance in that area. Country Fire Association (CFA) services are staffed entirely by volunteers; any additional impost upon the demands upon volunteers may render the service unmanageable. This indicates that additional demand by the project(s) may place additional stress on the capacity of emergency services.

In summary, the project's non-resident workforce will result in a small population increase during the construction phase and this may have an associated short-term increase in demand for health and emergency services. At the emergency services level, particularly in rural areas, capacity is limited or affected by high levels of existing demand.

Table 9-13 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on community infrastructure and services

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community infrastructure and services						
Construction	**Negative:** The project's construction workforce may increase demand for health and emergency service providers, which may compromise service provision to the existing local and regional community.	Community infrastructure and services: Health and wellbeing	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	The project's non-resident workforce will result in a small population increase during the construction phase and this may have an associated short-term increase in demand for health and emergency services. At the emergency services level, particularly in rural areas, capacity is limited or affected by high levels of existing demand.

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
						The moderate magnitude is based on the criteria that there will be a noticeable change, it will affect a notable proportion of the community and it will be medium term (longer than 6 months).

Environmental performance requirements

The project's potential impacts on community infrastructure and services relating to health and wellbeing will be managed through the following:

- Development of a contractor workplace health and safety plan that meet the standards contained within the project's workplace health and safety management system.
- Development of an emergency response plan, which will be developed in consultation with local emergency response providers and include joint emergency response protocols.

These impacts will be managed through the social impact management plan (EPR S01)

MLPL has also committed to developing a community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S04) that could potentially generate positive outcomes for community infrastructure and services. A community benefits sharing strategy considers how a project can add value in a local area and what it takes to become a welcomed development in the community. The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S04	**Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop a community benefits sharing scheme in consultation with communities and First Peoples in the local study area. The community benefits sharing scheme should be developed having regard to Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers (July 2021).	**Design, Construction, Operation**

Residual impact

Following the implementation of the potential mitigation and management measures to comply with EPRs, the residual impact of the project on community infrastructure and services for health and wellbeing will be **low** (based on sensitive value and **negligible magnitude** of impact). The negligible magnitude rating is reflective of the fact there will be marginal change; it will impact a small number of individuals and the effect will not be long term. Furthermore, no compromise to service provision to the existing local and regional community is expected due to the project.

Table 9-18 summarises the assessment of the project's potential residual impacts on community infrastructure and services during the construction phase.

9.4.1.2 Operation

As detailed in Section 6.7, the operational activities for the project are limited to one to three personnel to undertake maintenance activities. Regardless of whether these personnel are drawn from the existing population or in-migrate, the population change will be negligible. Therefore, no impact on community health and emergency services during operation has been identified or assessed.

9.4.2 Road access and connectivity

9.4.2.1 Construction

Project activity and change

The stakeholders interviewed for this SIA expressed concern that the traffic network may be affected by additional use during the construction phase of the project. Concerns were raised about the capacity of the road network to cope with the movement of the required goods and services from throughout the region to the project sites.

As detailed in the EIS/EES Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport, the additional traffic volumes generated as a result of the construction activities are not expected to exceed the capacity of the main and local road network. However, some gravel roads will exceed their capacity during construction activities. Moreover, many local roads will experience a large change in traffic during construction periods due to very low existing traffic use.

An increase in the number of heavy vehicles on the road network may give rise to perceptions of reduced road safety for users and wide loads may result in an increase in travel times.

The movement of the transporter may cause significant public transport disruption in its journey from Melbourne as it may be required to cross transport connections including rail, tram and will use roads with dedicated bus services.

Potential Impacts

Key impacts were identified and assessed in EIS/EES Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport. These are summarised in Table 9-14 below:

Table 9-14 Summary of identified road network impacts

Summary of potential impacts	Detail of potential impacts
Road network capacity: • The capacity of the arterial road network. • The capacity of the local road network and the net change in traffic volumes. • Intersection capacity assessment. • Connectivity of the road network, and provision of alternative routes.	• No main roads were identified to be over capacity as a result of construction activities. • The local road network will not exceed its operational capacity as a result of construction activities. • Some gravel roads will exceed their capacity during construction activities; this is addressed in the pavement assessment. • Many local roads will experience a large change in traffic during construction periods due to very low existing volumes. • A number of unsignalised T-intersections will operate above capacity based on Austroads safety requirements. • Minor treatments such as traffic management speed limits will be implemented. • Only Waratah Road operates as a single point of access arterial road within the study area. • No roads are proposed to be closed as a result of the construction activities.
Impact summary: the pre mitigated performance of the road network in the project area during construction to create delays for existing road users, reducing the efficiency of the rural road network for rural road users in the local study area.	
Safe Road Performance, Condition and Design • The condition of the road pavement. • Swept path analysis to assess the current road geometry. • A review of historical crash data to identify any crash patterns or higher-risk locations within the network. • Sight distance review to identify any problem intersections. • Height clearance requirements of the transformer transporter • Operational safety considerations.	• Various road pavement improvement works will be required throughout the road network. • Localised road widening is required at site access points to accommodate semi-trailers. • Extensive road works and traffic management will be required for the movement of the transformer transporter. • Various operational safety requirements will be enforced to ensure construction activities occur in a safe manner.
Impact summary: the pre-mitigated capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project.	
Public and Active Transport • The public transport network, including the following: ▪ The train network ▪ The bus network ▪ School buses ▪ Trams • Active transport infrastructure surrounding the site, including: ▪ Recreational rail trails ▪ Dedicated cycling infrastructure ▪ Footpaths	• Consultation to ensure heavy vehicle movements will occur outside the operation of school buses in the area. • The movement of the transformer transporter will be conducted to minimise the impact on public transport services. • There will be minimal impact on active transport infrastructure in the study area.
Impact Summary: the pre-mitigated impacts on road safety, including the road safety of vulnerable road users, including children and school buses.	

The below table (Table 9-15) provides an assessment of the pre-mitigated impacts when considering the sensitivity and magnitude of each impact.

Table 9-15 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on physical infrastructure

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Community infrastructure and services						
Construction	**Negative:** The performance of the road network in the project area during construction. Delays may be created for existing road users, reducing the efficiency of the rural road network for rural road users in the local study.	Infrastructure and services: Physical infrastructure – connectivity	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	The level of traffic generated on the local road network during peak events will increase the relative traffic in the area. This will affect a notable proportion of the community and it will be medium term (longer than 6 months).
	Negative: Disruption of public transport services and infrastructure**.**	Infrastructure and services: Physical infrastructure – connectivity	Sensitive	Major	High	The magnitude of major reflects the potential for severe disruption to public transport services on the path of travel of the transformer transporter. This could flow on to impacts to services in Melbourne.
Construction	**Negative:** The capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project.	Infrastructure and services: Physical infrastructure – safety and capacity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	The side road intersection will have potential safety and road performance issues, and this will affect a notable proportion of the community and it will be medium term (longer than 6 months).

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Construction	**Negative:** Reduced road safety, including the road safety of vulnerable road users, including children and school buses.	Infrastructure and services: Physical infrastructure – safety and capacity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	There are a number of schools and kindergartens that are present along the routes that will experience an uplift in traffic (including heavy vehicles) as a result of the construction of the project. This impact could affect a significant proportion of a vulnerable group and therefore has a moderate magnitude rating.

Environmental performance requirements

The EPR (T01) proposed to manage the impacts on road access and connectivity are contained in the EIS/EES Technical Appendix W: Traffic and transport. Maintaining the social value of the road network in terms of community access and safety will also be addressed in the SIMP, particularly to address any cumulative or residual impacts (EPR S01). Through the communication protocol established as part of the community and stakeholder engagement framework, advanced notification on any road upgrades, closures or impacts will be provided to the community – this will help manage expectations. The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S03	**Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework** Prior to commencement of project works, develop a community and stakeholder engagement framework to outline the approach to engagement with community, stakeholders and First Peoples will be undertaken for project and by all contractors.	**Design, Construction, Operation**
T01	**Develop a transport management plan**	**Design, Construction**

Residual Impact

Following the implementation of the potential mitigation and management measures to comply with EPRs, it is anticipated that the project's use of the road network will be managed effectively and impacts on the social values of the transport network will be managed. The residual impact relates to the following:

- The performance of the road network in the project area during construction could create delays for existing road users, reducing the efficiency of the rural road network for rural road users in the local study area. Through the implementation of EPRs including the transport management plan the magnitude is

reduced to minor. Providing advanced notification of any disruptions to nearby residents and landowners will play a key role in minimising this impact. The residual impact has been reduced to **low.**

- The disruption to public transport services is reduced to a **negligible magnitude** rating with the implementation of EPRs that will ensure the movement of the transformer will occur overnight to avoid impacts on public transport services. This will result in residual impact of **low**.
- The capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project. The magnitude reduces after the implementation of the potential mitigation measures from moderate to **minor**.
- Reduced road safety, including vulnerable road users such as children and school buses, is low based on very sensitive value and negligible magnitude of impact. The impact was reduced to **low (negligible magnitude)** as the transport management plan will prohibit heavy vehicle travelling past schools during pick-up/drop-off and prohibits travel through townships during local events.

The project's potential impacts on the access and connectivity of the local road network during construction are summarised in Table 9-18.

9.4.2.2 Operation

Through designing transport infrastructure to maintain safety in operation (T02), in accordance with the transport management plan (T01) the operation and maintenance phase risks are negligible. The decommissioning phase risks have the potential to be comparable to the construction phase risks.

As detailed in Section 7.5.5, the operational activities for the project are limited and will require a small number of personnel to undertake maintenance activities. Therefore, it is not expected that there will be any impact on the access and connectivity of the local and regional road network during the operations of the project.

9.5 PEOPLE'S PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY

This section considers the potential for the project to impact people's productive capacity to participate in society and its economy in the local and regional study area through impacts on health and wellbeing, skill development and food security.

No credible potential impact pathways were identified where the project could affect food security during the construction or operation phase.

9.5.1 Health and wellbeing

9.5.1.1 Construction and operation

Project activity and change

The uncertainty associated with transmission line developments can create fears and concerns about the impact of the proposed change on communities and the environment in that they live. The concerns (described below) that were expressed by community members in the SIA consultation and the community engagement are consistent with those identified in the literature about transmission line placement (see, for instance, Elliott and Wadley 2012 and Wadley et al. 2019).

Potential impact

Potential impacts on wellbeing associated with the planning, construction and operation phases of the project include:

Concerns regarding health impacts. During the SIA consultation, concerns regarding the potential for electromagnetic fields (EMF) to impact the health of nearby residents were expressed. Independent scientific studies examining the potential health effects of exposure to EMF have been undertaken around the world for more than 50 years. Based on the findings of credible public health authorities, the body of scientific research on EMF does not establish that exposure to EMF at levels below the recognised guidelines cause or contribute to any adverse health effects (Energy Networks Association 2016). The World Health Organisation has also undertaken extensive research into EMF and has advised that current evidence does not confirm the existence of any health consequences from exposure to low levels of EMF. However, it is recognised that some members of the public attribute a range of psychological reactions to exposure to EMF, including headaches, anxiety, suicide and depression (World Health Organisation 2021).

The EMF and EMI (electromagnetic interference) levels associated with the Driffield and Hazelwood converter stations and the HVDC cables were assessed and compared to applicable limits and reference levels (see JMME 2022) and concluded the following:

- The static and slowly varying electric field strength levels produced by the land HVDC cables will be negligible and will not impact the environment.
- The electric field strength levels at the converter stations are below the applicable reference levels and limits.
- The static and slowly varying magnetic fields produced by the subsea and land HVDC cables will have the highest intensity where the cables separate and come together across the Tasmanian and Victorian shore crossings because of the large physical separation between cables. These elevated field levels are, however, below the reference levels for general public exposure and active implantable medical devices.
- The possible effect of the static magnetic field disturbances from the proposed land cable on bee hives located very close to the HVDC land cable cannot be precisely ascertained and should be further investigated.
- The EMF magnetic field level associated with the two converter station options is below the applicable reference levels and limits.
- The area surrounding the converter stations, subsea cables and land cables was assessed and it was confirmed that there are no sensitive receptors that could be impacted by the EMI from the stations or HVDC cables.
- Radio frequency interference emissions from the converter stations and cables will be negligible.
- There are no sensitive receptors along the project alignment or near the converter stations that are particularly sensitive to electromagnetic interference from the proposed installations.

Concerns about the impacts on the natural environment. The potential for the project to introduce weed species in the construction and operations phase has been raised during SIA consultation with key stakeholders. This is considered in detail in EIS/EES Technical Appendix K: Agriculture and forestry.

Concerns were also raised about the impact of the project construction and operation on the natural environment within the Mirboo North IPA. This is considered in detail in EIS/EES Technical Appendix V: Terrestrial ecology.

For some of the landholders, residents, and stakeholders, the project's planning, construction and operation may result in anxiety, stress and frustration. Similarly, residents of local communities and stakeholders with interests in managing natural environments may experience stress and anxiety as a result of the project's construction.

Table 9-16 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on physical and mental health

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Health and wellbeing						
Construction	**Negative:** The project's planning and construction will require an investment of time by landholders and may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration.	People's productive capacities: Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	The magnitude rating has been provided based on the duration of the project and the direct impact it will have in terms of noticeable change from baseline conditions for affected landowners.
Construction and operations	**Negative:** Concern about the project's potential impacts (e.g., EMF) may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration for surrounding residents and communities.	People's productive capacities: Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	The magnitude rating has been provided based on the duration of the project and the notable proportion of people within the community that may have concerns.
Operations	**Positive:** The project may add to the health and wellbeing of residents in the study area through investments in community infrastructure, the potential for downward pressure to be placed on the market regarding energy prices, as well as greater telecommunication security through expansion of the supply-side infrastructure.	People's productive capacities: Health and wellbeing	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	The very sensitive rating has been determined by consultation and the baseline which rates health and wellbeing as very sensitive. Also, cost of living pressures are currently a considerable concern. While the moderate magnitude rating reflects that these impacts will affect a notable proportion of people within the community.

Environmental performance requirements

MLPL will develop a property management plan for each landholder that includes the following:

- Agreed land access protocols.
- Agreed engagement protocols, including preferred contact processes.
- Records of past engagement, including issues raised and agreed outcomes.

This is required by EPR A02 to develop property management plans.

MLPL will also implement a project-specific community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPR S03) for the project, which will inform the community about the project, focusing on areas of community interest and concern, including:

- Effects of EMF and how the project limits community exposure to EMF.
- Project's potential impacts on biodiversity and the approach to managing these.

- Project-wide grievance mechanism.

The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S03	**Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework** Prior to commencement of project works, develop a community and stakeholder engagement framework to outline the approach to engagement with community, stakeholders and First Peoples will be undertaken for project and by all contractors.	**Design** **Construction** **Operations**
	Agriculture	
A01	**Complete property condition surveys prior to construction.**	**Design, construction**
A02	**Develop and implement property management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural properties**	**Design, construction**

Residual impact

Following the implementation of mitigation and management measures to comply with EPRs, it is anticipated that the potential impact on wellbeing will be temporary and may extend to a number of landholders. Therefore, the magnitude of the impact will reduce to **minor**, resulting in a residual impact of the project on landholder wellbeing **moderate**. Similarly, it is expected that the mitigation and management measures implemented to comply with EPRs will reduce the magnitude of impact on the community to **minor** and consequently, the residual impact of the project on community wellbeing is **low**.

The potential to improve people's wellbeing through the reduction in electricity prices and investment in community infrastructure is **high**.

The project's potential impacts on wellbeing is assessed in Table 9-18.

9.5.2 Skill development and training

During consultation for this SIA, concern was raised about the skill capacity of the residential workforce to meet the project demand for workers. Section 6.7.1 identified groups in the regional study area that have higher unemployment rates within the overall workforce. Females were identified as experiencing high rates of unemployment by comparison to males and youth in the Latrobe-Gippsland region and youth also experienced high rates of unemployment in comparison to youth as a whole within Victoria. First Peoples participation in the workforce was also examined and found an over-representation within the unemployment status.

Section 7.3.1 addressed workforce availability. This section addresses the impacts of the project on the employment opportunities for First Peoples, females and youth.

9.5.2.1 Construction

Construction phase employment will be short term and local employment associated with the project will be predominantly through contractors.

Potential impact

The civil construction industry in Victoria has been described as lacking diversity in entrants to the industry, such as women, retention challenges, an ageing workforce and sometimes poor workplace conditions as further contributing to this challenge (Victorian Skills Authority 2022). Furthermore, the Latrobe Valley Authority (2022:ii) suggests that levels of First Peoples employment decrease and levels of unemployment

and not being in the labour force increase from inner regional to outer regional locations such as the Gippsland region.

In the absence of any affirmative action undertaken by the industry sector or state government, First Peoples, women and youth will continue to experience high levels of unemployment in the region, despite the significant opportunities presented by the cumulative increase in demand for skilled labour from this and the other energy-related projects.

The creation of employment opportunities for First Peoples aligns with the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country-Plan (2015) of "wellbeing of our mob" through creating stable employment opportunities. MLPL will continue to consult with First Peoples to develop and implement an industry participation plan.

EIS/EES Technical Appendix B: Economics anticipates the delivery of the project will generate economic activity across the regions and states and has the potential to contribute to a higher standard of living, wages and employment opportunities. Among other anticipated benefits to the community are potential lower energy and telecommunications costs. In terms of lower energy (electricity) costs for consumers, the project assists in securing cost-effective Tasmanian dispatchable generation as the national energy market transitions. The capacity introduced by the project could assist to exert downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices by facilitating the replacement of marginal and coal-powered generators with additional dispatchable capacity. Under the current circumstances of high and escalating energy costs, downward pressure is a relevant and material benefit to residents and the community. In terms of telecommunications, the project will also expand opportunities for optical fibre routes across the Bass Strait, supporting greater telecommunication diversity and security between Tasmania and mainland Australia. Such an outcome may also translate into opportunities for local innovators and entrepreneurs.

Table 9-17 Pre-mitigated impact assessment on education, training and skills

Project phase	Potential impact (positive or negative)	Affected social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Justification for magnitude rating
			Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact	
Education, training and skills						
Construction and Operation	**Positive:** Employment opportunities for First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce are made available.	People's productive capacities: Education, training and skills	Sensitive	Negligible	Low	Opportunities for employment for those within the study area are available; however, the skill levels of vulnerable groups are unlikely to match the workforce requirements. The impact will therefore be negligible as only a small number of vulnerable individuals are expected to be qualified.

Environmental performance requirement

The employment associated with the project will be with contractors rather than MLPL directly. However, MLPL will encourage local employment and training through the evaluation of the primary contractor's approach to local employment during the tendering phase.

Additionally, the project will:

- Continue to participate in workforce development initiatives.
- Develop an industry participation plan.
- Encourage local employment and training through their tenders and contracts to seek increased workforce participation of socially vulnerable populations, including but not limited to First Peoples, females, and youth.
- Develop acommunity benefits sharing scheme.

The relevant EPRs are shown in the table below (EPR S04, EPR S05, EPR S07). The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7. The local study area referred to in the EPRs below is defined in section 5.3.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
EM08	**Develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples**.	**Construction, operation**
S04	**Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop a community benefits sharing scheme in consultation with communities and First Peoples in the local study area. The community benefits sharing scheme should be developed having regard to *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers* (July 2021).	**Design, Construction, Operation**
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy.	**Design, Construction, Operation**

Residual impact

The project's potential impact on the employment pathways for First Peoples, females, youth, and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce is assessed in Table 9-18.

Creating employment pathways for First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups through affirmative actions in the regional construction workforce will create a positive **moderate** impact (based on a very sensitive value and minor magnitude of impact).

9.6 RESIDUAL IMPACT SUMMARY

A summary of the outcomes of the social impact assessment using the sensitivity and magnitude approach and considering the implementation of EPRs is presented in **Table 9-18.**

Table 9-18 Summary of residual impact assessment

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Community Identity: Construction										
Construction	Noise, vibration and visual disturbances causing amenity impacts.	Negative	Community identity: Landscape and amenity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework NV02 – Develop and implement a construction noise and vibration management plan	Minor	The implementation of EPRs will require the implementation of measures to minimise the impacts of noise during construction. This will include notifying landowners and land managers in advance of the works occurring, and the development of a complaint handling and response protocol	Moderate
Construction	Amenity impacts for nearby residents due to dust from construction activities.	Negative	Community identity: Landscape and amenity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	AQ1 – Develop and implement a construction dust management plan. S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework	Negligible	The implementation of EPRs that utilise the dust management and mitigation measures from the IAQM, EPA Victoria guidance documents will ensure activities have minimal impact on sensitive receptors	Low
Construction	The project's construction activities may result in temporary access changes to regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches that are used by the community and are highly valued.	Negative	Community identity: Land use and natural resources	Very Sensitive	Moderate	High	S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework T01 – Develop a Transport Management Plan	Minor	With the implementation of the recommended EPRs, it is anticipated that the changes in access to public land will be reduced to the extent that the preservation and people's use and enjoyment of the regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches will generally be maintained. There are likely to be temporary changes in amenity and this may reduce the use of these areas for short periods.	Moderate
Construction	The project's construction could impact on fauna and flora through injury or fatality through vehicle strikes, disturbance of habitat through vegetation clearing and fire risk.	Negative	Community identity: Ecology.	Very sensitive	Major	Major	EC01 – Avoid or minimise native vegetation and habitat loss and degradation EC02 – Develop and implement a biodiversity management plan EC03 – Implement aquatic habitat protection measures	Minor	In line with the EPRs, activity or location-specific management measures will be developed and incorporated into the detailed design and construction management plans to ensure further avoidance and mitigation are achieved. Based on the implementation of effective measures to achieve the EPRs, it is expected that the impact on native vegetation and habitats could be reduced in the final design. Through the implementation of the EPRs, impacts on threatened species can be minimised or avoided. Specific management measures will be determined by the contractors.	Moderate
Construction	Impacts on the marine environment from construction activities offshore and nearshore.	Negative	Community identity: Ecology	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	MERU07 - Develop and implement a marine fauna management plan. MERU08 - Develop and implement a cetacean interaction management plan	Minor	The EPRs will ensure a dedicated fauna management plan with protocols will be developed and implemented to help mitigate construction impacts on the marine environment. A subplan will be developed to specially manage interactions with cetaceans.	Moderate

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Community Identity: Operation										
Operations	Amenity impacts from operation activities, such as noise and vibration impacts.	Negative	Community identity: Landscape and amenity	Very Sensitive	Minor	Moderate	NV04: Design the converter station to minimise the risk of harm from noise so far as reasonably practicable NV05 – Prepare an operation noise management plan (ONMP) for the converter station and transition station sites S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework	Negligible	With the implementation of an operation noise management plan, the airborne noise generated by operation of the converter station affecting noise sensitive areas will be of a negligible magnitude.	Low
Operations	Views of the converter stations from public locations may impact on a community's sense of place	Negative	Community identity: Landscape and amenity	Very Sensitive	Minor	Moderate	LV01 – Design converter station buildings to minimise visual impacts from public locations LV02 – Implement measures to establish and maintain a vegetative screen for public views of above ground components LV03 – Design transitions station to minimise visual impacts from public locations	Negligible	Through the implementation of EPRs the impact on communities and residents will be reduced by directly avoiding areas where the primary purpose is stated as residential; maximising setbacks to areas within the Township and Rural Living Zones; minimising distances where the project will run parallel to major roads, highways, and tourist routes; and minimising the amount and type of vegetation required to be removed.	Low
Operations	Ongoing impacts on flora and fauna in line with maintenance activities such as access tracks maintained through vegetation, injury from vehicle movements, weeds and pests, dust emissions, fire ignition risk from vehicles, fragmentation of habitat and disturbance to fauna and flora through lighting.	Negative	Community identity: Ecology	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	EC01 – Avoid or minimise native vegetation and habitat loss and degradation EC02 – Develop and implement a biodiversity management plan EC03 – Implement aquatic habitat protection measures	Negligible	Through the implementation of the EPRs, impacts on threatened species can be minimised or avoided. Specific management measures will be determined by the contractors undertaking maintenance works..	Low
Operations	The project's establishment may result in changes to amenity and character that reduce the use of valued regional reserves, rail trail, marine areas and beaches that have high community use and are highly valued.	Negative	Community identity: Land use and natural resources	Very Sensitive	Negligible	Low	S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework	Unchanged		Low
Community identity: Aboriginal cultural heritage – construction and operation										
Construction	The project's establishment may result in the loss of Aboriginal cultural heritage values.	Negative	Community identity: First Peoples values, cultural diversity and heritage	Very Sensitive	Major	Major	EM08 – Develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples CH02 – Comply with the Cultural Heritage	Minor	The EPRs will involve the development of protocols, recording standards, management of artefacts, procedures and reporting. The CHMP will ensure compliance with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).	Moderate

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Operations	Project activities in the operational phase that result in vegetation removal and disturbance of ground surfaces and/or subsurface deposits may also create potential impacts on cultural heritage values.	Negative	Community identity: First Peoples values, cultural diversity and heritage	Very sensitive	Major	Major	Management Plans (CHMPs) 18201 and 18244	Minor	There will also be ongoing consultation with First Peoples throughout the life of the project.	Moderate
Economy and livelihood: Employment opportunities, skills development and industry - construction										
Construction	The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce within the local and regional study area.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S02 – Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy S04 – Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme S05 – Develop an industry participation plan	Unchanged		Moderate
Construction	The project's construction is expected to support the short-term employment of approximately 50% of the total construction workforce from the state and national workforce.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low		Unchanged		Low
Construction	The project may contribute to a diversity of longer-term and secure employment opportunities and skills training opportunities for residents across a range of skill levels. There might also be jobs created in related industries who benefit from the economic activity, including retail, administrative services and accommodation and food services.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate		Unchanged		Moderate
Construction	The project's construction will support local businesses through the goods and services required to support the project's development.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S05 – Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Moderate	The magnitude rating has increased to moderate based on the non-residential and short-term construction workforce seeking accommodation from local and regional accommodation providers, which will create a positive impact on these regional businesses. Also, the project will procure goods and services in accordance with the project's industry participation plan to support local businesses (including compliance by suppliers and contractors).	High
Construction	During the project's construction access to areas within Bass Strait will be restricted which may impact on commercial fishing and shipping operations.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan MERU06 – Develop and implement a Marine Communication Plan	Unchanged		Moderate
Construction	The project's construction may contribute to the creation of new opportunities for First Peoples businesses to provide services that support activities and workforces on the ground as work progresses.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S05 – Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Minor	Implementation of the industry participation plan will enhance opportunities for First Peoples businesses.	Moderate
Construction	The project's construction may contribute to existing and predicted demand for the construction sector, which may require formalised workforce training and development in the local and regional study area.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Minor	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan	Unchanged		Moderate

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Construction	Potential for tourism accommodation to be constrained due to the construction workforce using short-term accommodation providers. This may result in lower tourists visiting the region impacting on revenue for regional tourism operators and local businesses such as retail and food services	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	S02 – Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy S04 – Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme	Unchanged		Moderate
Construction	A majority of the project's non-resident workforce will utilise short-term accommodation providers in the regional study area.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S02 – Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy	Unchanged		High
Economy and livelihood: Employment opportunities, skills development and industry - operation										
Operations	The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.	Positive	Economy and livelihood	Very sensitive	Moderate	High		Unchanged		High
Operations	The project's operation is expected to support the employment of three direct employees within the local and regional study area.	Positive	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S05 – Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Unchanged		Low
Economy and Livelihoods: Workforce availability - construction										
Construction	The project's construction may contribute to the demand for construction workers and attract employees away from local businesses. This may reduce the availability of these workers for other industries, and result in increased lead times or workforce shortages for local businesses.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Employment and workforce	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S04 – Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme	Unchanged		Moderate
Economy and Livelihoods: Housing affordability and availability - construction										
Construction	The project's workforce may contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, which will disproportionally affect very low- and low-income households.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Housing affordability and availability	Very sensitive	Major	Major	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S02 – Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy	Moderate	A comprehensive workforce and accommodation strategy and plan will be developed to address both the demand from the project construction workforce and the cumulative impact of other large-scale construction and infrastructure projects in the region. This will help mitigate the magnitude of the impact.	High

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Economy and Livelihoods: Agriculture and Forestry - construction and operation										
Construction	Disruption to agriculture, and forestry activities, including restricted access to onsite infrastructure, will reduce productivity.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	A01 – Complete property condition surveys prior to construction A02 – Develop and implement property management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties A03 – Develop and implement property soil management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties A04 – Develop and implement a rehabilitation strategy to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties A05 – Avoid impacts on organic farming certification	Minor	Property management plans will be developed for each property and reviewed at least every 6 months. They will cover the practical aspects, potential impacts and rehabilitation phases of the project. They will confirm specific requirements such as easement fencing, access points, the continuation of water supply across the working area, biosecurity requirements, storage of surplus soil and rehabilitation requirements. Through the implementation of the property management plans, the magnitude of this impact has been reduced.	Moderate
Construction	Reduced productivity yields of the agriculture and forestry from damage caused by construction activities to the natural assets, including soil, water, topography, and vegetation.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	A01 – Complete property condition surveys prior to construction A02 – Develop and implement property management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural properties A03 – Develop and implement a soil management plan to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural properties A04 – Develop and implement a reinstatement and rehabilitation plan to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural properties A05 – Avoid impacts on land capability A06 – Develop and implement measures to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties during operation	Minor		Moderate
Construction	Biosecurity risk to agriculture and forestry activities with the potential introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Major	Major		Negligible	Informed by engagement with Agriculture Victoria and each land manager, biosecurity protocols will be developed and implemented for each property specific to the agricultural activities undertaken and this will reduce the potential magnitude to negligible. In line with the technical study, the magnitude of this impact has been reduced to negligible through the implementation of the EPRs.	Low
Construction	Impacts to the forestry industry with reduced woods flows from permeant clearing of tress or premature harvesting.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Major	Major		Minor	The restrictions on plantation harvesting practices and permeant removal of wood stock will be mitigated through EPRs that lead to route refinement and final design reduce impacts on coupes. As a result, the magnitude has been reduced to minor.	Moderate
Operations	Biosecurity risk to agriculture and forestry activities with the potential introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from operational and maintenance activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Major	Major		Negligible	Informed by engagement with Agriculture Victoria and each land manager, biosecurity protocols will be developed and implemented for each property specific to the agricultural activities undertaken and this will reduce the potential magnitude to negligible.	Low

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
Operations	Reduced economic and environmental viability of the agricultural, forestry and other farming enterprises from damage caused by changed agricultural practices, impacts to soil and water quality caused by incursions from project operation and maintenance activities.	Negative	Economy and livelihood: Industry and business	Very sensitive	Moderate	High		Negligible	Rehabilitation of land following use for construction is critical to manage and prevent impacts on land capability. Management measures will be developed specifically for each property and implemented to reinstate the property to maintain soil stability, fertility, and ground cover species that are optimal for the industry.	Low
Infrastructure and services: Community health and emergency services - construction										
Construction	The project's construction workforce may increase demand for health and emergency service providers, which may compromise service provision to the existing local and regional community.	Negative	Infrastructure and services: Health and wellbeing	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	S01 – Develop and implement a social impact management plan S05 – Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Negligible	EPRs to reduce the magnitude of impact to negligible. This is reflective of the fact there will be marginal change; it will impact a small number of individuals and the effect will not be long term. Furthermore, no compromise to service provision to the existing local and regional community is expected due to the project.	Low
Infrastructure and services: Road access and connectivity - construction										
Construction	The performance of the road network in the project during construction may cause delays for existing road users, reducing the efficiency of the rural road network for rural road users in the local study area.	Negative	Infrastructure and services: Connectivity	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate	T01 – Develop a transport management plan S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework.	Minor	The local road network will experience a noted uplift in traffic as a result of the construction activities, particularly on local roads used to access laydown areas. EPRs including the transport management plan and consultation will provide local residents and landowners with prewarning that construction activities will be occurring.	Low
Construction	Disruption of public transport services and infrastructure.	Negative	Infrastructure and services: Connectivity	Sensitive	Major	High		Negligible	The movement of the transformer transporter should occur overnight, avoiding public transport services.	Low
Construction	The capacity of the road network's road condition, design and operation of the road network to perform safely is reduced through additional traffic use by the project.	Negative	Infrastructure and services: Safety and capacity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High		Minor	Through the implementation of EPRs, upgrades will be made to roads and intersections to ensure road conditions are adequate. In line with the recommendations of the road safety audit and condition inspections, EPRs require appropriate upgrades of pavement, bridges, intersections and other road infrastructure. Also, clearing of land, vegetation and furniture may be required if larger vehicles are required during construction.	Moderate
Construction	Reduced road safety, including the road safety of vulnerable road users, including children and school buses.	Negative	Infrastructure and services: Safety and capacity	Very sensitive	Moderate	High		Negligible	A transport management plan will be developed that prohibits heavy vehicle travel past schools during pick-up/drop-off and prohibits travel through townships during local events. Continuous engagement will ensure any changes to school bus routes is known.	Low

Project phase	Potential impact	Type of impact: Positive or negative	Social value	Pre-mitigated impact assessment			Recommended EPRs	Residual impact assessment		
				Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact		Magnitude	Justification for change in magnitude	Impact
People's productive capacities: Health and wellbeing – construction and operation										
Construction	The project's planning and construction will require an investment of time by landholders and may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration.	Negative	People's productive capacities: Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework A01 – Complete property condition surveys prior to construction A02 – Develop and implement property management plans to avoid or minimise impacts on agricultural and forestry properties	Minor	By consulting and communicating directly with impacted landowners, including the development of property management plans and precondition surveys to monitor any changes, the magnitude of this impact has been reduced to a minor.	Moderate
Construction and operations	Concern about the project's potential impacts (e.g. EMF) may result in feelings of stress, anxiety and frustration for surrounding residents and communities.	Negative	People's productive capacities: Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	S03 – Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework	Minor	By consulting and communicating directly with impacted communities, there is the potential to reduce the magnitude of this impact. This includes providing advanced notification of any potential disruption.	Moderate
Operations	The project may add to the health and wellbeing of residents in the study area through investments in community infrastructure, the potential for downward pressure to be placed on the market regarding energy prices, as well as greater telecommunication security through expansion of the supply-side infrastructure.	Positive	People's productive capacities: Physical and mental health	Very sensitive	Moderate	High	EM08 – Develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples S04 – Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme S05 - Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Unchanged		High
People's productive capacities: Skills development and training - construction and operation										
Construction and operations	Employment opportunities for First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce are made available.	Positive	People's productive capacities: Education, training and skills	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low	EM08 – Develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples S04 – Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme S05 - Develop and implement an industry participation plan	Minor	Through the adoption of the recommended EPRs, there is the opportunity to increase employment opportunities and therefore increase the magnitude of this potential benefit.	Moderate

9.7 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

A fundamental shift has occurred in the last 10 years in the domain of focus for social impact assessment. Current leading practice, both in Australia and internationally, is for the adoption and implementation of Social Impact Management Plans (SIMPs) for large-scale projects in the infrastructure and resources space (Esteves, Franks and Vanclay, 2012; Franks and Vanclay, 2013; Vanclay, Esteves and Franks 2015). This management tool better facilitates the monitoring and management of predicted social impacts but also permits a proactive approach to unintended consequences and residual impacts. A further leading practice tool is ongoing project community and stakeholder engagement.

The local study area referred to in the EPRs below is defined in section 5.3.

Table 9-19 Environmental Performance Requirements

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction. The social impact management plan should be location specific and address key components of the construction program, including the staging of land cable trenching and installation. The plan should be a public document and be readily available on the project website. The plan must include: • A high-level summary of community baseline conditions, a summary of the anticipated social impacts (positive and negative), potential residual impacts and consideration for cumulative impacts. The plan will be reviewed and updated to address any shifts in the socio-economic environment on the baseline and impacts, and consider the ongoing cumulative impacts of projects in the region. • Incorporate key strategies, their objectives for managing social impacts and the responsibilities for implementation of the strategies including the workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02), community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPR S03), community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S04), and industry participation (EPR S05). • An employment and training performance strategy with a focus on providing local opportunities. • Describe the requirement for first response medical capabilities on-site for both local and non-local employees and contractors to minimise the impact on local health services. • Outline of a protocol to be developed for engaging with community and managing social impacts during an emergency that must be developed in consultation with local emergency response providers and referenced in the project's emergency response plan. • Specific strategies to support local farming communities in the region to address potential impacts resulting from the project. The social impact management plan must be implemented during construction.	**Design, Construction**
S02	**Develop and implement a workforce and accommodation strategy** Develop a workforce and accommodation strategy to address the potential social impact from the project's workforce and accommodation requirements during construction. The strategy must: • Be developed in consultation with government, industry and other relevant providers. • Include a protocol for the identification and management of impacts due to accommodation requirements.	**Design, Construction**

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
	• Address cumulative impacts on accommodation due to other large-scale construction and infrastructure projects in the identified local study areas. The outcomes of the strategy must be addressed during construction planning.	
S03	**Develop and implement a community and stakeholder engagement framework** Prior to commencement of project works, develop a community and stakeholder engagement framework to outline the approach to engagement with community, stakeholders and First Peoples will be undertaken for project and by all contractors. The community and stakeholder engagement framework must: • Identify key community and stakeholder groups across the project. • Describe the approach for engaging the community, stakeholders and First Peoples. • Establish communication protocols and tools for communication. • Outline complaints policies and management procedures for recording, managing, and resolving complaints. The complaints management system must be consistent with *Australian Standard AS/NZS 10002: 2014 Guidelines for Complaints Management in Organisations*. Principal contractors must prepare a community and stakeholder engagement management plan in accordance with the framework for their works package, and ensure sub-contractors comply with the management plan. The community and stakeholder engagement framework and contractor's community and stakeholder engagement management plan must be updated annually to reflect any project or stakeholder changes and improvements identified. A register of complaints must be maintained by MLPL and provided to the Minister for Planning with annual audit reporting if requested. The community and stakeholder engagement framework must be implemented during construction.	**Design** **Construction** **Operation**
S04	**Develop and implement a community benefits sharing scheme** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop a community benefits sharing scheme in consultation with communities and First Peoples in the local study area. The community benefits sharing scheme should be developed having regard to *Community Engagement and Benefit Sharing in Renewable Energy Development: A Guide for Renewable Energy Developers (July 2021)*.	**Design, Construction, Operation**
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy. The plan must: • Set out an employment and supplier-use participation target within the project's locality. • Outline the project's social procurement policies and local procurement policies considering each component and phase of construction. • Be developed in conjunction with the requirements under the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework (February 2019). • Identify a range of potential opportunities for job-seekers and businesses to be involved in the project across the construction supply chain. • Set employment targets with reference to the local First Peoples working age population within the project area and consistent with the 'locals first principle'. • Identify opportunities for females, youth and other socially vulnerable groups to be involved in the project workforce.	**Design, Construction, Operation**

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
	The plan must be implemented during construction and operation.	

9.8 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A cumulative impact assessment has been completed for the project in line with the impact assessment method outlined in 5.9.7. Projects were identified that each might have potential the potential to affect social values in close proximity to the local study area. Table 9-20 lists the timeframe, status and job creation (where available) for projects relevant to the cumulative impact assessment

Cumulative social impacts will likely arise due the proximity of projects as this may create ongoing concern around disruption to amenity for the local community. Furthermore, the construction programs will likely overlap and cumulative social impacts will most likely arise through changes to demand for accommodation and housing, as well as through disruption to access and travel delays caused by increased movement of workers' vehicles and construction vehicles.

The other driver of social impacts will be the workforce requirements, during the construction phase with the identified projects having overlapping construction periods. The study area may benefit from improved livelihoods through increased patronage and access to employment associated with the combined works being undertaken. Considering limited community infrastructure and services in the study area, it is likely that negative cumulative social impacts may arise, especially around healthcare.

Under the Step Change (Rutovitz et al. 2023b:5) scenario, employment associated with the Gippsland REZ will be an average of 600 full time equivalent jobs between 2023 and 2049. The proportion of which will be attributed to transmission is not yet clear.

Should the projects considered for the cumulative assessment all progress, approximately 1500 jobs will be required between 2024 and 2030 for construction see Table 9-20 for details.

Mitigation and management measures implemented for individual projects will assist in managing cumulative impacts on the identified values. Cumulative impacts are most effectively managed by collaboration between industry, state and local government and other stakeholders in the planning, design and delivery of the projects. Some cumulative impacts are most effectively managed by the Victorian Government through the development of policies, guidelines and state-wide planning criteria particularly related to the renewable energy sector in the Gippsland region.

Table 9-20 Projects considered in the cumulative impact assessment

	Project	Timeframe and status	Projected job creation
1	Delburn Wind Farm	• Currently commencing construction • To be completed in approx. 2023 • Operation to commence in 2025 • Design life: 25-30 years.	• Construction 2024 to 2026: 186 full-time jobs • Operation to commence in 2026: 24 full-time jobs
2	Star of the South – Offshore Wind	• Currently under planning/environmental approvals • EES being prepared for 2021 to 2024 • Construction proposed to commence in 2025 • Operations to commence from 2030.	• Construction 2025 to 2030: 750 construction jobs and 200 ongoing jobs

	Project	Timeframe and status	Projected job creation
3	Hazelwood Rehabilitation Project (former mine and power station decommissioning) – the project will have an interface with this project	• Currently under planning • EES being prepared for 2022 to 2024 • Construction proposed to commence in 2025 • Operation to commence from 2029.	• Construction proposed to commence in 2025 to 2029: 500 workers required in the decommissioning, demolition and rehabilitation projects.
4	Wooreen Energy Storage System	• Currently under planning/environmental approvals • Operation to commence end of 2026	• Construction 2024-2026 more than 80 jobs.

While not considered as part of this cumulative assessment several other projects that are in the early planning and development stages but have not progressed substantially to be able to consider in the cumulative impact assessment. It is important to note, these projects may adversely impact community sentiment towards renewable projects. In particular, proposed projects in the offshore wind development zone in Gippsland will attract community interest these include Greater Gippsland Offshore Wind Project (BlueFloat Energy), Seadragon Project (Floatation Energy), and Greater Eastern Offshore Wind (Corio Generation).

9.9 SOCIAL VALUES

9.9.1 Economy and livelihoods

This social value considers the cumulative impact of the projects using indicators such as the availability and affordability of housing, the cost of goods and services and income levels. Table 9-21 provides an overview of the cumulative impact (beneficial or adverse) to the communities, businesses and government.

Table 9-21 Cumulative impacts to the communities, businesses and government

Impact	Type	Overview
Income levels	Beneficial	Construction expenditure is anticipated to result in increased purchases of goods and services between sectors in the construction supply chain and results in increased employment outcomes and associated wages and salaries. The combined capital and operating expenditure associated with the projects will contribute significantly to increased gross regional and gross state product.
Housing availability and affordability	Adverse	Housing affordability was reported as a widespread community concern during consultation for this project. Some of the towns in the local and regional study area are experiencing a shortage of rental accommodation, and most have recorded a rental vacancy rate under 2.0% for some time. Rental availability affects affordability and exacerbates the financial and housing vulnerability of disadvantaged people. Disadvantaged persons (measured by the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage) are concentrated in the urban areas within the Latrobe and South Gippsland LGAs. Accommodating such a large construction workforce poses a significant impact on regional housing affordability if not mitigated appropriately.
Cost of goods and services	Beneficial	Downstream businesses and broader supply chains are expected to benefit from both supplying the construction and operating activity of the projects, as well as through reduced electricity prices. Service providers to the project (such as those businesses required for construction, maintenance, operations and decommissioning/ rehabilitation) will service the needs of the project through the flow of impacts in the supply chain. These businesses will benefit due to higher levels of activity, which can lead to increased profits. The associated incomes and profits can also lead to increased investment, production and consumption by businesses and households, further supporting the supply chain.

Impact	Type	Overview
Workforce participation	Beneficial	In general, the unemployment rate in the region has remained above Victoria's unemployment rate for the past 10 years. This has been attributed to industry structural reforms and the redundancies that followed. The proposed developments will provide a range of direct and indirect employment opportunities, which should increase participation in the workforce.
Demand and competition for construction workers	Adverse	The Victorian civil construction industry employs 24,900 people in 2,500 businesses. The cumulative demand of the identified projects for workers equates to more than 4,160 construction workers. Some businesses/industries may experience small reductions in growth relative to what would otherwise be expected to occur without the projects due largely to competition for constrained resources. This is primarily anticipated for industries that require similar skill sets to those used in the construction of projects (such as road construction, agriculture, and manufacturing). These sectors may experience higher costs due to competition for constrained labour resources and increased costs of business as competition for resources drives input prices up (including labour). During operations, the competition for labour resources such as engineers and trades workers may impact industries requiring similar skill sets.
Benefits to the supply chain	Beneficial	Construction expenditure is anticipated to result in increased purchases of goods and services between sectors in the construction supply chain and results in increased employment outcomes and associated wages and salaries. Service providers to the various projects (such as those businesses required for construction, maintenance, operations and decommissioning/ rehabilitation) will service the needs of the project through the flow of impacts in the supply chain. These businesses will benefit due to higher levels of activity, which can lead to increased profits. The associated incomes and profits can also lead to increased investment, production and consumption by businesses and households, further supporting the supply chain.
Government revenue	Beneficial	The broader economic activity supported through the range of projects will create additional government revenues for the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments. Given the considerable economic impact of the projects, the implications for government revenues will likely be significant.

Environmental performance requirements

Rental availability: The current demand for rental housing is high and the availability is constrained throughout the region. To mitigate the impacts of this project, MLPL will develop a workforce and accommodation strategy to address its potential impact on the rental housing market within the region. However, the cumulative impacts of the other projects will be severe if they are not mitigated appropriately. It should be noted that even with the mitigations implemented by the project, rental availability and affordability is likely to remain an issue for the community.

Competition for construction workers: The construction workforce will consist of a mix of local hires within the region and specialists who will be recruited from other parts of Victoria and Australia. However, it is noted that any skills development associated with the project's employment will be an indirect impact (i.e., not undertaken by the project) and largely associated with cumulative demand for employees in the construction sector.

Procurement of goods and services by the project is governed by the industry participation plan, which seeks to maximise opportunities for local businesses. The project also expects that its suppliers and contractors will undertake their procurement activities (i.e., with sub-suppliers and sub-contractors) in a manner that applies this guideline. The project will encourage local employment and training through the evaluation of the primary contractor's approach to local employment during the tendering phase.

The relevant EPRs which will manage cumulative impacts are shown in the table below (EPR S01, EPR S02). The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction. The social impact management plan should be location specific and address key components of the construction program, including the staging of land cable trenching and installation. The plan should be a public document and be readily available on the project website. The plan must include: • A high-level summary of community baseline conditions, a summary of the anticipated social impacts (positive and negative), potential residual impacts and consideration for cumulative impacts. The plan will be reviewed and updated to address any shifts in the socio-economic environment on the baseline and impacts, and consider the ongoing cumulative impacts of projects in the region. • Incorporate key strategies, their objectives for managing social impacts and the responsibilities for implementation of the strategies including the workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02), community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPR S03), community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S04), and industry participation (EPR S05). • An employment and training performance strategy with a focus on providing local opportunities. • Describe the requirement for first response medical capabilities on-site for both local and non-local employees and contractors to minimise the impact on local health services. • Outline of a protocol to be developed for engaging with community and managing social impacts during an emergency that must be developed in consultation with local emergency response providers and referenced in the project's emergency response plan. • Specific strategies to support local farming communities in the region to address potential impacts resulting from the project. The social impact management plan must be implemented during construction.	**Design, construction**

Residual cumulative impacts

Rental availability: Despite the implementation of the workforce and accommodation strategy for the project, it is anticipated that the changes to demand for rental housing in the regional study area will remain high. A collaborative (government and industry) approach to regional workforce accommodation is required to reduce the residual cumulative impact from **Major** to predevelopment levels (Table 9-22). The Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan Draft (June 2023) further outlines the transition process. The project will collaborate with local government and other businesses in the energy industry.

Competition for construction workers: Despite the mitigation measures that the Victorian Government, industry collaborations and the project applies, the cumulative demand for construction workers will remain high throughout the region. This is attributed to the demand by other industries requiring similar skill sets that will remain throughout the construction stages of the projects. It is anticipated that the cumulative residual impact is **Moderate** (Table 9-22).

Table 9-22 Cumulative residual impact on communities, businesses and government

Potential impact	Residual impact assessment for the project	Cumulative residual impact assessment		
		Sensitivity	**Magnitude**	**Impact**
The cumulative impact of the project workforce will contribute to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbate existing rental availability and affordability issues, which will affect very low and low-income households disproportionally.	Moderate (negative)	Very sensitive	Major	Major (negative)
The demand and competition for skilled labour resources may impact industries requiring similar skill sets.	Moderate (negative)	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate (negative)

9.9.2 Infrastructure and services

This social value considers the cumulative impact of the projects using indicators of community services. Table 9-23 provides an overview of the cumulative impact to health and emergency services in the region.

Table 9-23 Cumulative impacts to health and emergency service provision in the region

Impact	Type	Overview
Demand for health and emergency services	Adverse	The cumulative construction workforce will increase the demand for health and emergency services. The combined demand may be greater than the capacity of these services, particularly given that the General Practitioners within the region have already closed their books to new patients. In the event of an accident, local emergency services such as ambulance, police and fire services will be required to respond and workers to be treated at the local community health care centres or the Latrobe Regional hospital facility.

Environmental performance requirements

If additional demand were placed on medical and health services because of the combined construction workforce, it will most likely relate to primary health care services. The current demand for GPs within the region is high. To minimise any potential increase in demand, the project will mitigate the impact of its predicted workforce upon the demand for health and emergency services by:

- Providing first-response medical capabilities on-site for both local and non-local employees and contractors.
- Collaborating with government, industry and other providers to develop programs to mitigate the impact on health services in local communities.

Management measures to address cumulative impacts relating to health and emergency provision will form part of the social impact management plan (EPR S01). The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S01	**Develop and implement a social impact management plan** Prior to commencement of project works develop a social impact management plan. The plan must be developed in consultation with relevant government and local government agencies, key stakeholders, and directly affected parties to minimise social impacts across the project during construction. The social impact management plan should be location specific and address key components of the construction program, including the staging of land cable trenching and installation. The plan should be a public document and be readily available on the project website. The plan must include: • A high-level summary of community baseline conditions, a summary of the anticipated social impacts (positive and negative), potential residual impacts and consideration for cumulative impacts. The plan will be reviewed and updated to address any shifts in the socio-economic environment on the baseline and impacts, and consider the ongoing cumulative impacts of projects in the region. • Incorporate key strategies, their objectives for managing social impacts and the responsibilities for implementation of the strategies including the workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02), community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPR S03), community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S04), and industry participation (EPR S05). • An employment and training performance strategy with a focus on providing local opportunities. • Describe the requirement for first response medical capabilities on-site for both local and non-local employees and contractors to minimise the impact on local health services. • Outline of a protocol to be developed for engaging with community and managing social impacts during an emergency that must be developed in consultation with local emergency response providers and referenced in the project's emergency response plan. • Specific strategies to support local farming communities in the region to address potential impacts resulting from the project. The social impact management plan must be implemented during construction.	**Design, construction**

Residual cumulative impacts

By implementing the recommended management measures, it is anticipated that the project could reduce the residual impact of its workforce and the demand placed on health and emergency services will be **low** (Table 9-24). Reducing the cumulative residual impact created by the other projects will require a collaborative (government and industry) approach to regional healthcare provision. Consequently, the **cumulative residual impact** is **Moderate**.

Table 9-24 Cumulative residual impact assessment of health and emergency service provision in the region

Potential impact	Residual impact assessment for the project	Cumulative residual impact assessment		
		Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact
The cumulative impact of the project workforce will contribute to the demand for health and emergency service providers, which may compromise the service provided to the existing regional population.	Low (negative)	Sensitive	Moderate	Moderate (negative)

9.9.3 People's productive capacities

This social value considers the cumulative impact of the project on the capacity to participate in society and its economy. Table 9-25 provides an overview of the cumulative impact of the projects upon the inclusion of First Peoples, women, youth and other socially vulnerable populations from construction workforce participation.

Table 9-25 Cumulative impacts of the exclusion of First Peoples, women, youth and socially vulnerable populations in the construction workforce

Impact	Type	Overview
High levels of unemployed women and youth in the region	Adverse	If regional unemployment trends continue as they have for the past 10 years for both females and youth, then these will be exacerbated with the introduction of a large and predominantly male construction workforce. In the absence of affirmative action, First People, females, youth, and socially vulnerable groups will be excluded from construction workforce participation.

Environmental performance requirements

The civil construction industry workforce in Victoria is predominantly male and ageing, which places the sustainability of the industry at risk. However, the explicit involvement of females and youth in the industry could address this risk. MLPL will develop an industry participation plan that assesses ways of integrating First Peoples, females, youth and other socially vulnerable groups into the workforce. MLPL will make provision for the integration of the an industry participation plan within their contracts and tenders to increase the participation of under-represented groups. This is specified as an Environmental Performance Requirement (S6). The full EPRs are provided in Section 9.7.

EPR ID	Environmental Performance Requirements	Project phase
S05	**Develop and implement an industry participation plan** Prior to the commencement of project works, develop an industry participation plan to integrate First People, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups into the project workforce. The purpose of industry participation plan is to stimulate entrepreneurship, business and economic development, providing First Peoples and vulnerable groups with more opportunities to participate in the economy. The plan must: • Set out an employment and supplier-use participation target within the project's locality. • Outline the project's social procurement policies and local procurement policies considering each component and phase of construction. • Be developed in conjunction with the requirements under the Indigenous Employment and Supplier-use Infrastructure Framework (February 2019). • Identify a range of potential opportunities for job-seekers and businesses to be involved in the project across the construction supply chain. • Set employment targets with reference to the local First Peoples working age population within the project area and consistent with the 'locals first principle'. • Identify opportunities for females, youth and other socially vulnerable groups to be involved in the project workforce. The plan must be implemented during construction and operation.	**Pre-Design / Contract Procurement**

Residual impacts

Following the implementation of the an industry participation plan by MLPL, the residual impact is **Moderate (positive)** for the project. Targeted training and workforce skill development is required to address the inclusion of First Peoples, women, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction workforce. In the absence of a collaborative (government and industry) approach to an industry participation plan to increase workforce participation of under-represented groups, it is anticipated cumulative residual impact will be **Low (positive)** (Table 9-26).

Table 9-26 Cumulative residual impact on female and youth unemployment

Potential impact	Residual impact assessment for the project	Cumulative residual impact assessment		
		Sensitivity	Magnitude	Impact
Employment pathways for First Peoples, females, youth and socially vulnerable groups in the regional construction and operations workforce are made available.	Moderate (positive)	Very sensitive	Negligible	Low (positive)

9.10 INSPECTION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring, reporting and review requirements have been indicated as requirements of the social impact management plan (EPR S01), workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02), community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPR S03) and community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S05). MLPL will also develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples (EPR EM08)

The SIMP and the Environmental Management Framework will be the two central frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the EPRs and approvals to mitigate agricultural, socioeconomic and land use effects and contingencies.

10. CONCLUSION

The project is significant in supporting Australia's energy transition and a net zero future. The project will unlock Tasmania's renewable energy and storage resources to deliver low-cost, reliable, clean energy for customers in the National Electricity Market.

The outcomes of the SIA consultation and broader MLPL engagement have provided insight into what the local community and landholders value about their areas and the places that are important to them. It has identified areas of community concern and social impacts from the project to inform the impact assessment and development of EPRs and identify potential benefits that the project may provide.

The project will deliver socio-economic benefits to regional and local communities outlined in the study area by providing employment and training opportunities. Employment opportunities for females, youth, First Peoples and socially vulnerable groups may be created through demand for a regional construction workforce. The project could also benefit the study area by generating prosperity, placing downward pressure on energy costs, providing greater telecommunications security, and supporting local businesses through the goods and services required to support the project's development. The project is expected to result in large taxation receipts ($762 million in total from 2025 to 2050) from the economic activity generated by the project, which will flow to local, state and the Australian Government.

However, during construction, existing social values for communities closest to construction works may be impacted due to property impacts with the creation of restricted construction areas; changes in amenity and character of the local area; reduced access to regional reserves, rail trails, marine areas and beaches; changes to the rural road network and condition of the road network to perform safely; and general amenity impacts from noise and dust during construction.

The assessment has determined that protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage values, threatened species of fauna and native flora, and the marine environment are 'very sensitive values' for the community and the magnitude of impact is major and high before mitigation measures are implemented.

High unmitigated impacts to agriculture and forestry were identified due to the damage to natural assets such as soil and water and to production due to restricted access. A major impact, before mitigation, is the potential impact of biosecurity on farms through the introduction of weeds, pests, pathogens, diseases, or contaminants that reduces yields, quality and marketability of the farm produce from construction activities created through the movement of people (and their food and water), equipment, machinery and vehicles. The impact on forestry with the loss or reduction of wood stock is also major prior to mitigation and the finale route alignment and design will be integral in reducing this impact to moderate.

Careful management of construction impacts and tailored landowner management plans will help minimise impacts and protect the local community's quality of life and values. While the overall scale of the construction is significant, the impacts on individual properties will be for a limited time compared with the broader operational benefits for Victoria and Tasmania, which will coincide with the project's operational life.

The SIA outlines a range of potential mitigation measures to comply with EPRs to reduce the potential impacts on the community. These impact management plans and schemes are the SIMP (EPR S01), workforce and accommodation strategy (EPR S02), community and stakeholder engagement framework (EPRS03), community benefits sharing scheme (EPR S04), and an industry participation plan (EPR S05). MLPL will also develop and implement a strategy for ongoing engagement with First Peoples (EPR EM08). The SIMP is an overarching framework that will outline specific mitigation measures and management strategies, detail implementation actions and define roles and responsibilities.

The SIA highlights that the cumulative impact on rental housing is major, with the impact of the project workforce contributing to the demand for rental housing in the regional study area and exacerbating existing rental availability and affordability issues, which will disproportionately affect very low and low-income

households. A collaborative approach between government and industry to manage accommodation requirements for the regional workforce accommodation is required to reduce the residual cumulative impact.

The cumulative impacts also highlight that despite government and industry collaboration, the cumulative demand for construction workers is expected to remain high throughout the region. Also, the demand for health and emergency service providers will require a coordinated government and industry approach to mitigate the magnitude of the impact on regional healthcare provision.

Overall, the SIA demonstrates that with the implementation of mitigation measures, only one negative impact has a residual rating of ‘high’, and this impact is during the construction phase only, so is temporary in nature. Several positive benefits can be further realised through adopting enhancement measures.

Based on the impact assessment, no social impacts are identified that will prohibit the project from proceeding. Potential social impacts identified in this assessment will continue to be monitored, measured and re-assessed as the project progresses.

Close consultation with regional communities, First Peoples, landholders and managers of community facilities in the study area will help to realise local benefits. Engagement will also enable effective management of the potential impacts through sharing knowledge, joint actions and building lasting relationships.

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